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HOURS

OF

CHRISTIAN DEVOTION

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OF

CHRISTIAN DEVOTION

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

INASMUCH as in the case of a devotional work, more than of any other, what is personal to the Author claims consideration, I take leave to communicate the following particulars:—

For several years I had, in common with many others, felt the want of a sterling book of devotion — the product of our own times, and judiciously adapted to the prevailing wants; and I was surprised that, among the increasing number of works on the practice of Christianity, there appeared none calculated to be for the age in which we live what those of Thomas à Kempis and of John Arndt were for theirs. It is true that the Church still possesses the treasure bequeathed to her by those and other witnesses for the truth, who were masters of the art of speaking to the heart; and that such sterling works of the olden time will never cease to sustain and foster vital Christianity, as long as the Bible continues to lay the foundation of it. At the same time, however, they do not by any means preclude the necessity of a work originating in the present day. For does not the difference between books of devotion and the Holy Scriptures consist in this, that the latter furnish the prolific seed of all the many and various developments of spiritual life, and consequently provide a fund of spiritual nourishment suited for all ages and all individuals alike; whereas a book of devotion delineates one particular form of it, modified by its own particular age, and by the peculiarities of the individual author? Is there not a connection between the mode in which the religious life is at any time expressed and the then prevailing degree of culture; and in consequence of this, do not different periods claim for a book of devotion a corresponding difference in style? And even, although that point be overlooked, considering that there are at least a few models of excellence in form which continue classical for all ages, has not

every age dangers and errors, discoveries and views, conflicts and afflictions, peculiarly its own? There can be no doubt, therefore, that beside the devotional books of bygone times a place on the shelf is due to more modern productions; and would not an À Kempis, a Tauler, and an Arndt, had they lived in the nineteenth century, have spoken with far greater power than they do to the hearts of the present generation?

The thought of labouring in this field of literature, however, was foreign to my mind until awakened by outward incidents. First of all, in the year 1826, when bowed down both in mind and body by long and severe indisposition, I began to write meditations on passages of Scripture chiefly with a view to my own consolation. The task was never finished. During my second visit to England, I received a fresh impulse by becoming acquainted with a work of which the plan appeared to me eminently suited for family worship. It contained select portions of sacred Scripture, chiefly of a practical tendency, and one for every day of the year. Short solutions of the difficulties were given for the purpose of promoting insight into the meaning of the Word. There was then appended a meditation upon the text, and finally a prayer embodying, as vows to God, the resolutions inspired by the subject. I still think that a devotional work executed according to such a plan is a real want of the Church of our native land still requiring to be supplied; and I was stirred up repeatedly to think of composing a work of the sort. It was, however, the state of my eyesight, which for a length of time threatened to fail me, that proved the occasion of my writing the book which I now present to the Christian world. During the winter mornings and evenings I was prevented from pursuing my usual employments by candle-light, and it was then that, in quiet rumination, the plan of these 'Hours of Christian Devotion' was matured. At the time, the danger of being compelled to resign for several years, if not for ever, my vocation as professor, was constantly present to my mind; and if a season of affliction is not in general the most unfavourable for the production of a religious work, I may be permitted to indulge good hopes of the success of the present one, as not only the original conception but also the subsequent execution of it occupied what were very grave hours of my life.

On the other hand, I am well aware how much there is to weaken this expectation. The curse of the present age, which

has proved the main hindrance to the production of a sterling work of Christian devotion, will not spare *mine*. The force of intuition, and with it of vital faith, is broken by the predominance of the reflective power, which lifts its voice not merely in the professor's chair, where it has a right to be heard, but even in the closet of prayer. It is the fatal worm which is perpetually gnawing at the faith of our times, and consuming its vigour. When I speak of reflection, I do not mean, as many may misapprehend, the doubts which may arise in individual minds. What I mean is, the habit of reflecting upon the reasonableness of faith which necessarily presupposes the positive existence of doubt. If, however, the true theologian be he who, after climbing the ladder of science to a height at which he has the unclouded heaven in view, delights himself with gazing into it, and no longer thinks of the steps of the ladder save when employed in the friendly office of helping those at the foot to mount—if he, I say, be the true theologian, then certainly there is no better school for perfecting his education than that of affliction, for there he becomes practically confirmed in the article of faith, and has no leisure to look anywhere but above himself. Whether I have succeeded in supplying to any extent an existing want, time must decide. To myself it is a satisfaction to know that the work is not the product of reflection, but owes its origin to external inducements which were wholly unsolicited.

For some time I could not make up my mind with regard to the plan. At first I hesitated whether to make it a work for family use or a devotional book of a more general character; next, whether to adopt exclusively the form of meditation, and in that case, whether the meditation should adhere closely to the text, or take a wider range; and finally, what arrangement would best answer the purpose in view. Hardly any of our books of devotion are methodically arranged. The casual contemplations which they deliver present themselves like flowers upon the meadow, to be plucked as any one likes. Something may perhaps be said in favour of this plan; at any rate, such a lack of method is preferable to an excess of it, when obtained at the expense of freedom and liveliness. It may, however, be objected to such an unmethodical collection, that it is wholly inartistic; and, moreover, that there are arrangements by which certain advantages, intellectual as well as religious and moral, may be attained. I therefore came to the resolution to give in these meditations a view of

the *Development of the Christian life* on both its inward and outward sides. This further entailed that the book should be of a more general character, and also that it should take the form of meditations; because for family worship, at which the whole household, including the servants, are present, this form is, in my opinion, less suitable than that which I have above described. By the plan which I have adopted I likewise hope to meet the wants of those who, at least, are not destitute of Christian feelings, but in whom these are not accompanied by a developed Christian intelligence. Bishop Mynster's book endeavours to combine edification with an exhaustive exposition of the doctrines as they are classed in systems of theology. My endeavour has been to do the same with regard to the doctrine of the *Christian way of salvation.* A rigid systematising is in general repugnant to my nature, and as my fondness *for carving out of the raw material* equals my aversion to the *process of gluing*, I have not sacrificed freedom of expatiation to regularity of plan. Within the limits of the course taken by the work, as a whole, freedom and variety obtain. Most books of devotion are chargeable with monotony. That is a fault which I have endeavoured to avoid—or rather, to speak more correctly, it is a fault into which the peculiarity of my mind has prevented me from falling. In writing these meditations I have felt myself in my proper element much more than in the composition of sermons, the traditional form of which imposes fetters under which my mind often sighs for freedom. I have also ventured to lay aside the language of the pulpit, and, in so far as the subject admitted, have adopted the style sometimes of Claudius, sometimes of Thomas à Kempis, sometimes of Tersteegen, and at others, and indeed most frequently, of Luther. To that dear father of our Church I have owed more than I can tell in the composition of this work. In converse with such a man of steel—so pithy a nature—in whom certain phases of the Christian life were exhibited in the most finished style (although differently gifted individuals have displayed it more perfectly in others), I always felt myself edified, elevated, and strengthened. His image, I confess, had for several years presented itself to me under a cloud, for I fixed my eye too exclusively upon the outbreaks of his vigorous nature, ere yet it had been subdued by the Spirit of the Lord; and I felt myself inspired with purer sentiments of reverence for Calvin, whose mind was so well disciplined both in thinking and acting. But on resuming my study of Luther, when the

unction of faith and power consecrating his radically German character, the entire truthfulness of his being, and his wondrous childlike candour and *naïveté*, once more unfolded themselves in their glory to my eye, I was constrained to turn to him again with the most entire and unmingled affection, and to exclaim, His foibles are so great only owing to the greatness of his virtues!

Poetry speaks to the heart in quite another dialect than prose. It was therefore my intention to introduce an abundance of choice extracts from our old hymns; but it cost great labour to find them, and frequently I could not find at all such as I wished and required; I therefore spoke in the language of poetry myself. Very few of the verses dispersed throughout the work are by other authors. I am aware how much it thereby loses in pith and in ecclesiastical character; but there has also been a gain in originality, which is no inconsiderable advantage for a devotional work. As for tone and language, I could have wished for the power of speaking with the tongue of a Luther or a Claudius to enable me to speak to all; but at least I have endeavoured to learn from these masters.

The title chosen for the work will be disapproved by many. Some will wish not to be reminded in any way of the well-known "Stunden der Andacht;" others will at once perceive in it a sentence of condemnation of that widely-circulating work. The reason why this title was selected was simply in order that they who are pleased with the cooking of the food in the "Stunden der Andacht," but doubt of its wholesome and nutritive qualities, might be at once informed that there is something here which is intended to supply their wants. I am not of the number who, the moment they see that book in any person's hands, would snatch it away, as I am aware that in many cases it has fostered the seeds of good; but I certainly consider much of what it contains to be pernicious, and, most pernicious of all, the abundant nourishment it supplies to the conceit of self-righteousness. Besides, in works of this sort much depends not only upon what they *give*, but likewise and not less upon what they *withhold*. Now, what the "Aarau Stunden der Andacht" *withholds* is nothing less than what the Evangelical Church declares to be *the only true way of salvation*. The object proposed by the following meditations is to show what that way is. They claim to be an impartial and healthy portraiture of the Gospel life of faith, and in that respect are calculated to reconcile all such honest admirers of the former

work as are courageous enough not to shrink from the pain of self-knowledge. There is an inexcusable want of conscience in the way in which some men are now calling others Mystics and Pietists, while they wish to have it believed that these sectarian nicknames do not strike with equal force the Evangelical Church (I except Dr Bretschneider, who has the merit of speaking out, and who represents Luther and Melanchthon as the ringleaders of the Pietists). I therefore call upon all who may publicly express an opinion of this work, and feel disposed to characterise it as *pietistical*, to show so much at least of a sense of justice as expressly to state whether and to what extent they find the delineation it contains of the Gospel life of faith to be morbid; or whether, with Bretschneider, they denominate this form of piety pietistical, just because it does delineate what the life of faith is, according to the view of the Evangelical Church. Considering the blind party zeal of the opponents, and the reiterated acts of crying injustice which they commit, it were to be wished that none of them would enter the polemical field without seriously taking to heart the words of our Lord in Matthew, vii. 12.

Such are the remarks with which I desire to preface these 'Hours of *Christian* Devotion.' May so much of divine truth as they contain find its way into the heart, and to God be the glory and the praise.

A. THOLUCK.

HALLE, *29th September* 1839.

PREFACE TO THE SEVENTH EDITION.

HOWEVER little I could have expected it, I have had the gratification of emitting a sixth edition of this work, originally the fruit of hours of sorrow. It has been my endeavour to approximate the language to that simplicity, without which devotion can never reach its proper depth, more than was the case in the first edition. Since then many similar voices have been raised; among them may this of mine still for a while retain its youth.

A. THOLUCK.

HALLE, *25th October* 1859.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

IT is a gratification to me to see those Hours of Devotion translated into the English tongue, and presented to the nation by whom so many of my other works have already met with so kind a reception. The hindrance to an earlier translation of the work, as I anticipated from the first, and have now learned as a fact, has been its peculiarly German character. The texts of Scripture are cited and explained as they stand in Luther's version of the Bible; numerous passages are quoted from the writings of that reformer, and of other godly German authors; and a text is occasionally taken from the Apocrypha. Above all, however, I must here refer to the poetry prefixed as mottoes to the several meditations, and appended to them at the end. To meet this last obstacle, the translators of different countries have adopted different methods. The Swede has inserted hymns of his own Church; the Dane poetry of his own making; and the French translator has omitted the poetry altogether, and generally abridged even the prose text. The esteemed friend who has executed this English translation has not allowed himself to be deterred by any of these difficulties, and, as it appears, has even van-

quished with some success the last of them—that, namely, presented by the poetry.

I deem it of little importance that one of the parts of the book is not included in this translation;[1] I hope that, in spite of that omission, it contains a kernel which may take root and grow up in the heart of the readers. I have had the satisfaction of finding in a remote Waldensian valley a pious soul to whom the book, even in the extremely abridged form of the French translation, had become a source of happiness and edification. The hope I entertain for it rests upon the fact, that in place of being composed, like other works of the kind, I believe I can say of it with truth that it was rather an effusion. It was the fruit of a mind which sought to reap good to the Church from hours of sorrow as well as of joy, for it originated in a season of heavy trial, when, owing to the weakness of my eyesight, I was prevented in the winter evenings from prosecuting my learned studies. Like the pious Tersteegen, I then thought with myself: "If my God does not will as I do, I will as He does, and thus we always keep on friendly terms." I also sought to extract a gratification from those hours of bitter suffering by presenting to Christian souls a fruit of the heart in place of a labour of the head. And the Lord has been pleased to bless it, as I know by testimonies from the Churches of various countries which have reached me, and made me ashamed. I therefore indulge the hope, that in that Christian land, which above most others has been blessed with a riches of devotional books, this one also, in its own peculiar style, will find minds and hearts which will feel its attraction. It has a specialty adapted to the present religious wants of Britain; for while it edifies it seeks to *instruct*, and that

[1] This refers to the twelve Meditations on the Fasts and Festivals. These form an independent work.

on the practical duties of the Christian life. This, no doubt, it does exclusively upon the ground on which alone the fruits of life ever grow—I mean, the ground of *faith.* I have been young, but now am old—I have spent a whole lifetime in battling against infidelity with the weapons of apologetical science,—but I have become ever more and more convinced that the way to the heart does not lie through the head; and that the only way to the conversion of the head lies through a converted heart, which already tastes the living fruits of the Gospel.

A. THOLUCK.

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Its sole foundation's undermined.

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THE CIRCLE OF HUMAN LIFE.

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The Master calls him to the holy feast,
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7. In many things we offend.
8. Though I be unconscious of guilt, I am not therefore justified.
9. Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.
10. We are justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.
11. The Lord hath loved me with an everlasting love.
12. I obtained mercy, because I resisted ignorantly in unbelief.
13. Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.
14. Faith is a new sense.
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18. I am not come to destroy the law or the prophets.
19. O Lord, how great are Thy works, and Thy thoughts are very deep.
20. Thou understandest my thoughts afar off.
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24. Knowest thou not that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.
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26. The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.
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49. In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love.
50. Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.
51. Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?
52. The love of money is the root of all evil.
53. Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.
54. Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.
55. Put away lying, and speak every man truth with his neighbour.
56. Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers.
57. Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.
58. He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much.
59. There are many members, yet but one body.
60. Husband and wife are no more twain, but one flesh; what, therefore, God hath joined, let not man put asunder.
61. Marriage is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.
62. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house; thy children like olive-plants round thy table.
63. Suffer little children to come unto me.

64. He that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death.
65. It doth not yet appear what we shall be.
66. I saw a new heaven and a new earth.
67. The creature itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption.

THE CIRCLE OF HUMAN LIFE.

68. New-Year's Day.
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70. Baptism.
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I.

If Love be from true FAITH disjoined,
Its sole foundation's undermined.

HOURS OF DEVOTION.

1.

We are the Offspring of God.

God's son thou art, no doubt, but ah! the one
Who fled his Father's house, and was undone.

Acts, xvii. 28. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring."

I AM the offspring of God, for in Him we live, and move, and have our being. Of this consciousness—the consciousness that God is not afar off, but a God that is near—some trace, as I imagine, will be found in every human being not sophisticated by education or depraved by a life of sin. There must be something in our nature which connects us with the great Fountain of truth, goodness, and beauty; for otherwise how could we take delight in the true, the good, and the beautiful? The more simple and innocent a man is, the more vividly he feels that he is related to God, although into the nature of the relationship he has no clear insight. And this feeling must be rooted amazingly deep in the heart, for we hold it fast in spite of the misery and sin which abound in

the world, and which seem to give it the lie. I never could divest myself of the conviction that in this house of clay[1] there dwells a spirit whose native country is the other world. And to that other world the way is unobstructed. Angels still fly down from it, and bring messages to us here on earth. Yes, "God is a God at hand, and not afar off" from His creatures.[2]

All this I have said to myself; and yet when I reflect upon the miseries of man's life, the fickleness and frailty of his heart, and the black wickedness which he is capable of committing, I am far less inclined to wonder at those who, being destitute of the light of God's Word, doubt of their divine extraction, than at those who believe it. "Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not."[3] Oh, how pathetically do these words, from an early age of the world, express the sentiment, which suggests itself far more readily to the mind of him who contemplates the surface of human life than does the exclamation, "We are the offspring of God"! Hear, too, how Luther describes the human heart. "It is," he says, "like a ship at sea, tossed by tempests from the four quarters of the globe. On this side beat fear and anxiety about future misfortunes—on that, trouble and sorrow about present evil. Here presumption and hope of prosperity to come inflate, there blow the gales of joy and confidence in present blessings." How, then, can this fleeting child of an hour, this slave of every passion, be the offspring of God? It is a riddle; who can solve it?

So, indeed, may they exclaim who have not yet taken the divine Word to be the light of their feet. But, God be thanked! I know the simple solution. Man is the son of God; but he is the *prodigal* son, now sojourning in a far country and feeding upon husks.

[1] Job, x. 9; iv. 19. [2] Jer. xxiii. 23. [3] Job, xiv. 1, 2.

From God Himself I claim descent, of no mean lineage I;
Why then from heaven averted turns to earth my grovelling eye?
God lives and moves within me, sure that proves no vulgar birth!
And yet I live in bondage to the meanest things of earth.
Read me this riddle: Yes, my child, thou art of God the son—
That son who turned a prodigal, and fled and was undone.

Yes, here too, as in so many other instances, Holy Scripture reconciles the contradictory, and justifies each of the conflicting feelings in the human heart. But if I am the prodigal son, surely my first and great concern should be to understand correctly the miserable state to which I have been reduced. On this subject I must not allow myself to be dazzled by the recollection of the primeval nobility of my nature. That recollection should at the most only serve to kindle aspiration in my heart. How comes it that so many, yielding to the seduction of a foolish pride, disavow the debasing penury and wretchedness with which we are encompassed? They are like persons on whose ear some discord grates, but who persuade themselves that it is a concord, until at last they blunt their sense of hearing. Or they are like the unjust steward in the parable;[1] being ashamed to *beg*, they think it better to *cheat*, at least themselves. I will not imitate them. No; I acknowledge myself to be the prodigal, living in the far country, and feeding upon husks. The longing of my heart goes vehemently forth towards the land of spiritual freedom; it is my true fatherland, and

He who has known a home will kiss no more
The chain that binds him to a foreign shore.

Yes, I too exclaim, "I am the offspring of God," but I do it with eyes suffused with tears; for I perceive that the divine element within me is, contrary to its nature, thwarted, whereas of right it ought to *reign*. Man is the lost sheep once fed beneath the crook of the good Shepherd, and which then had sunshine and green pastures in abundance, but which has now

[1] Luke, xvi. 3.

gone astray in the wilderness and fallen among thorns. He is the lost penny, stamped with the image of a great king, but which has been trodden in the dust till scarce a trace of the august features can any longer be discerned.[1] And yet the immortal life from God, which is in me, is merely overpowered by death, but not extinguished. A resurrection-germ survives amid the fatal slumber, and shoots and labours towards the sun. I am aware that evil has the *might* within me, but I am also aware that to good belongs the *right.* I have read how in the land of Japan there is both a temporal and a spiritual emperor, and that the former possesses all the power, but is every year obliged to pay homage to the latter. There is the same relation between my sinful Adam and that divine image which even the Fall has not wholly obliterated from the soul of man.[2]

So yearns the prodigal and all that is within him after that archetypal and supremely perfect Son, above whose head the heavens were once opened, and the voice exclaimed, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." For Him he pants, to loose his bonds, and restore afresh the features of the divine likeness. I still retain within me, like a faint remembrance, a truth of God, which the apostle says was also "manifest in" the heathen, but was by them "held in unrighteousness;"[3] but I am like one who dreams, and the truth does not take distinct shape before my eyes. We often say we know a name although at the moment we cannot call it to mind; but let another come and utter the long-forgotten word and we recognise it at once. The same happens to us with respect to that truth from God in which we live, and move, and have our being, but which we are unable to recall. He who lay in the Father's bosom has uttered the word of it, and it too we recognise. Since then we see, what we never saw before, that we are *prodigal sons;* but at the same time we see the way which leads to our home.

[1] Luke, xv. 8. [2] James, iii. 9. [3] Rom. i. 18, 32.

THE SOUL.

My God and Father! I pant after Thee, and can no longer be satisfied with anything else. Thou art the source of my being, and, consequently, its end and aim. Wilt Thou know me again, all disfigured as I am?

THE LORD.

Make Christ thy robe, and then thou shalt be known,
If thou art *His,* for *mine* I will thee own.
Thy high descent no heritage bestows;
He is my son, whose soul *my image* shows.

2.

Our Days are few and full of Trouble.

The roses grow on thorns, say I,
The thorns on roses, you reply;
And to determine which has hit
The truth will tax a subtle wit;
Though sure it makes a difference vast,
Which word stands first and which comes last.

ECCLUS. xl. 1-4. "Great travail is created for every man, and an heavy yoke is upon the sons of Adam, from the day that they go out of their mother's womb till the day that they return to the mother of all things. Their imagination of things to come, and the day of death, *trouble* their thoughts and cause fear of heart; from him that sitteth on the throne of glory, unto him that is humbled in earth and ashes; from him that weareth the purple and a crown, unto him that is clothed with a linen frock."

WHETHER there be more of joy or sorrow in human life is a question on which very different opinions are entertained. In answering it, many circumstances must be taken into account, and none more than the quantity of human misery which we admit within our observation. There was once an Eastern king who, desirous that his eye might never fall upon the wretchedness of his subjects, barred the entrance of his palace even to the light of the sun, and beneath the glitter of variegated lamps spent his days in jollity and mirth. And so might any one spend his days, could he be content to live by lamp-light, and contrive to exclude from his mind all that afflicts himself and others. That is what I cannot do. I survey the foes which, in countless hosts within us and without, wage war with human happiness. I reflect on the heaps of disappointed hopes that lie behind, and on the no less numerous fears of future evil which brood before, every member of our race. I learn from experience that there is scarce a family, scarce even a single individual, who is not burdened with some peculiar care, or wounded by some secret sorrow, according to the words of the poet—

> "In this vain world the days are not all fair—
> To suffer is the work we have to do;
> And every one has got a cross to bear,
> And every one some secret heart-ache too."

I think upon the sufferings which men inflict upon each other, and upon all the heavy strokes which they receive from the hand of God; and when I then direct my view to what they usually consider the compensation—I mean their so-called *pleasures* and *enjoyments*—it always appears to me as if the thousands who exult over the rich delights of life were wilfully cherishing a delusion which, in a sober mood, and had they but leisure to be alone, would vanish, and give place to the confession that they were *not* happy. And when I further reflect on the kind of consolation with which they try to sweeten the bitterness of life and death—those paltry schoolboy rhymes, by

which they fain would sing to rest their hearts that will not rest, such as—

> " Taste life's glad moments,
> While the wasting taper glows;"

or,

> " Begone, dull care!"

and many of the same sort—O children! I exclaim, was ever a conflagration stamped out with the foot, or a falling avalanche arrested by the hand?

Of a truth, no clear-sighted man can doubt for a moment that this earth, on which hours of tame pleasure must needs be drowned in weeks of bitter anguish, is no longer a paradise. Deny it if you can, *ye* who involuntarily pay homage to the truth and are constrained to sing—

> Where grows the rose that has no thorn?
> My child, I cannot tell;
> No rose e'er blossomed here on earth,
> That had not thorns as well.

Nay, have not even the sages of the Gentile world sung to us "That every good vouchsafed to mortals is accompanied by two sorrows"? and as for the attempt to calm the troubled heart by alleging that without the thorns the roses would give us no pleasure, I never could persuade myself that that was true. For how comes it, then, that we dream of a *hereafter* where the roses have *no* thorns, and where the garlands *never* wither? If the light could not gladden the heart of man without its attendant shadow, the shadow of this earth would necessarily stretch across into the land of the blessed.

No: others may pass over the tears and shadows of this earthly life unconcerned—I cannot. Without belying my inmost convictions, I must assent to the words of the son of Sirach, that "Great travail is created for every man, and an *heavy yoke* is upon the sons of Adam, from the day that they go out of their mother's womb till the day that they return to

the mother of all things." I must admit that the same heavy yoke weighs upon him "that weareth the purple and a crown," as upon him "that is clothed with a linen frock." For though earthly misery, like sin, takes various shapes, not without reason did the ancients give wings to Care, for it is present in every place.

And I know of no key to the deep wretchedness of Adam's race save that which the Scriptures supply, when they tell us that the thistles and thorns first entered the earth with *sin*, and shall never be wholly extirpated save in that *new* earth wherein dwelleth *righteousness*.[1] No doubt this is a truth which it is very hard to confess. Admit it; and then every thorn upon the flowers of earth has a spiritual and unseen sting which wounds more sharply than that which pierces from without. And then, too, every thorn becomes to us a preacher of *repentance*. Oh, how deep a humiliation this is, and how revolting to the flesh! Are the cares which infest the earth already so many and bitter; and yet must I feel in every one of them the additional sting of sin? It is even so; but in the very fact that so it is, behold, O man, the badge of thy nobility! Here is a proof that misery and pain, the crown of thorns and the bitter cross, appertain no more to thee than they did to thy Saviour. Our suffering is our *bondage;* and when "the glorious *liberty* of the children of God shall come,"[2] they shall also be relieved from the thorny crown and the bitter cross. We shall then have grown to *full* age: for the present we are minors, and need the rod.

"It is a good thing," says the prophet, "for a man that he bear the yoke *in his youth*."[3] The days of our life on earth are to us all a time of youth. And though "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."[4] Yes: *afterwards* that peaceable fruit of righteousness shall we likewise reap.

[1] 2 Peter, iii. 13; Rev. xxi. 1.
[2] Rom. viii. 21.
[3] Lam. iii. 27.
[4] Heb. xii. 11.

And all the less can we avoid being humbled under tribulation, in respect that the heaviest strokes which fall upon us are those inflicted by our *fellow-men.* "Let me fall into the hand of the Lord, and let me not fall into the hand of men,"[1] was the prayer of the saints of old. Strokes of that sort serve to remind me of my own sin. Even the son of Sirach, in describing the misery of life, speaks of "anger, zeal, envy, contradiction, and variance;" and these, in fact, are the chief of the stripes with which *man* scourges his brother. But if earthly affliction of every sort makes us long for "an appeaser of all strife," much more does *this!* It is a perpetual discourse upon the theme, how greatly we stand in need of a Prince of Peace to reign over us.

When I think what must have become of me if I had passed all my life without having ever felt the weight of the divine hand, I shudder. Oh, how much good tribulation has done me! How it has rooted up the weeds and lopped off the rank shoots of sin in my nature; and how, beneath its influence, has my longing after a Saviour grown more and more intense! And when I further reflect how forgetful of God men are even now, overwhelmed although they be with so vast an ocean of tribulation and misery, I scarcely venture to figure to myself what they must have been *without it.* Would they ever have thought at all of an appeaser of discord, seeing that even in their present state they imagine they can dispense with His help?

O Lord, I refuse not Thy correction, for it is just: withhold not Thou from me Thy strokes; they are full of love and goodness. My soul is well pleased that Thou hast beset the ways of men with thorns. Oh, may all the thorns of earth fulfil their end, and discourse to me of the great heart-ache which sin has brought upon humanity! O Lord, we have merited this so bitter wrath of Thine, for great has been our transgression. But Thou hast proclaimed that "Whoso confesseth his sins and forsaketh them shall have mercy;"[2] and

[1] Ecclus. ii. 18; 2 Sam. xxiv. 14.

[2] Prov. xxviii. 13.

as I now confess my sins unto Thee, oh let me obtain the mercy which Thou hast promised.

THE SOUL.

Where can the rose that has no thorn be found?
Not on this earth of ours;
But, tell me, shall earth s roses always wound
The hand that plucks the flowers?

THE LORD.

I gave the rose at first a harmless boon,
The thorns are thine alone;
But ponder well the truth they teach, and soon
Their pain will all be gone.

3.

One Thing is needful.

Men blindly trifle this brief life away,
As thoughtless children treat their toys at play,
Which, prized at first, then spoilt, they cast aside
As ebbs the fit of fancy, like the tide.
We live without an aim, nor heed at all
The strict account for which the Judge will call.
Yet if the creature with his God contend,
Can any question how the strife must end?

LUKE, x. 41, 42. "And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her."

THERE is nothing which more clearly shows the deceitfulness of sin, than the fact that men so seldom inquire for what purpose they have come into the world. Sometimes,

no doubt, we do hear persons who would not be thought totally devoid of Christianity, saying to themselves, "I must work while it is day,"—as if all depended upon the working, and nothing upon the nature of the work. He who carries on some of the homelier trades of life seems likely to arrive at the conviction that, in and of itself, his occupation can never be the chief end and object of his existence, far sooner than he whose employment is of a higher kind. The Lord has told us that man was not made even for so external a work as *keeping the Sabbath;*[1] and far less, methinks, can he have been made to keep a shop, or hew wood, or exercise any common handicraft. These are all a mere *Martha's* service.

But oh how fatally does the deceitfulness of sin make sport of the men who cultivate learning and science and art! These things have quite a spiritual aspect, and the pursuit of them appears a high and noble vocation. Nor does one in ten of those who embrace it consider that, unless he make the love and glory of God his beginning and end, labour in the fields of literature and science is as much a bondage and a thraldom as that of the hind at the plough.

> Ah! then no more across the main
> For truth and wisdom fly;
> By love alone can souls obtain
> Worth and nobility.

In like manner, on the other hand, the humblest handicraft, when exercised from love to God and for His sake, becomes a lofty spiritual function. According to the words of Luther—

> "No holier work the priest performs,
> Than when in faith, to sweep the room,
> The Christian housemaid plies her broom."

History speaks to us of *earnest men*, who, from their first outset on the path of life, felt themselves secretly constrained to inquire where the path would lead them. They could not

[1] Mark, ii. 27.

but wonder at others who, though confessing themselves to be travellers, could yet tarry at the inns by the wayside, and trifle away their time, instead of hastening forward and preparing for the place destined to be their abode for ever. But oh how seldom are such characters to be found! The world ought justly to marvel at the man who makes no inquiry about his Maker or his Maker's will, as at something unnatural; whereas it almost seems to be the world's opinion that he is the monster who takes it into his head to be seriously concerned about any such matter. And yet the Being whom men thus forget is the God who made them!

But, while forgetting God, what a multitude of other things they trouble themselves about, especially in these days of sweet turmoil! How impetuously they pursue a good which all the while they might find within their reach! With what passionate ardour do many even of those who are above slaking their thirst at the marshes by the wayside, hunt in the fields of art and science for that sovereign balm which is to heal, and heal for ever, all the wounds of humanity! How piteously they mourn the loss of any opportunity to admire some masterpiece of art, as if they had trifled away the grace of God; and how eagerly they grasp at every new discovery in science as if it were a draught that would wake the dead! That science is good and art beautiful none can deny; but alas! until the *wounds* of the soul be healed, art and science only *inflame*, and cannot *quench* its thirst. Out upon the headlong impetuosity of men

> Who seek on ocean's boundless sands,
> But seek in vain, the pearl which 'scapes their eye,
> Hid in the refuge of some tiny shell!

Yes: not afar off have we to search for the pearl of great price—that pearl, to possess himself of which a man ought to sell all that he hath. The Son of God has bequeathed it to His Church; and, since that day, wherever a church exists, there also is a market where the pearl may be purchased. Out

upon the headlong impetuosity of mankind! Oh, while with thankful heart I look forth from my refuge among the green pastures and the still waters, and behold the multitude rushing with such haste and clamour along, and always passing the goal, at which, if they but knew it, it is their wish to arrive, how I long to cry out to them—

> Why thus precipitate?
> In your hot haste to reach you pass the gate!

Jesus, my Lord, truly dost Thou say that souls which, like Martha, labour only for this world's meat, are careful and troubled about many things, and that the better part is that which Mary chose; for since I began to hunger for the meat of heaven, my carefulness and trouble are greatly subdued, and now are always mingled with some sense of peace; whereas before, so long as I strove after earthly blessings and earthly wisdom alone, I was never free from restlessness and disquiet. But to the violent, who, with sword in hand, would make a conquest of Thee, Thou never yieldest. They only find who seek Thee with childlike hearts. The millions of sunbeams that warm and cherish us come all of them at once, but all so softly and silently down; and even so dost Thou desire to be sought — earnestly, indeed, but not with hot and boisterous haste. Dear Lord! when Mary took her place at Thy feet, Thou didst sit down beside her; and to every soul that longs after Thee Thou wilt do the same. Thy only wish is to see us all at Thy feet like her. From the silence that reigns in Thy school, I used to think that life in a manner ceased when love to Thee began; and, behold, I have found that "*in loving Thee I first began to live.*" So long as I was out of the centre I roved around the whole circumference of creation, and had no rest. I found the centre in finding God, and I need to wander about for rest no more.

True it is that avocations such as Martha's are also appointed for us in this life; and Thou Thyself, O Jesus, by Thy humble labours in the carpenter's shop, hast sanctified

all trades and handicrafts, thereby putting me to shame, and teaching me by Thy example to count no labour which life imposes, ignoble or unclean. A light in the centre illumines the whole circumference; and even so, when there is grace in the heart, it radiates its brightness upon all man's outward employments. Martha, then, performs her service, but she does it with the mind of Mary. Holy Jesus! doubtless Thy abour in the shop of Joseph was as much a worship as Thy prayers in the temple. It was ever Thy meat to do Thy heavenly Father's will, and with this hidden manna Thou wert regaled even when standing at the carpenter's bench. And the same hidden manna shall also be my food, whether in my workshop or at my desk, whether labouring in the fields or walking in the streets.

In every work, however mean,
Some touch of heaven we trace,
If but the heart within have felt
The influence of grace.
And art and skill, beneath love's ray,
Their choicest flowers and fruits display.

O Lord, rich in grace, when Thou takest possession of the heart, how beautifully all the natural talents Thou hast lent us expand! Beneath the sunny influence of Thy love even our secular employments thrive and prosper. Oh, if they but knew, how would the men who only strive for success in temporal affairs take to heart what Thy Word avers, that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come"![1] And were our philosophers and artists thoroughly penetrated by the light and warmth of the Sun of grace, how would the arts and sciences of this earthly life flourish as they have never yet done; and how much brighter would be the hue, and richer the fragrance, of the fruit they bore! Yes, one thing is needful.

Give me the one chief good, and, that possessed,
I, in that one, will relish all the rest.

[1] 1 Tim. iv. 8.

All Thou pervadest, Lord, oh let Thy light
Be shed upon my darkened sight!
As tender flowers their cups unfold,
And open to the sunbeams hold,
So let me too
Still fondly do,—
Imbibe Thy rays,
And take the moulding of Thy grace.

4.

Teach us to number our Days.

There's nothing that we less can trust
Than life and all it gives;
Nothing more sure than that to dust
Returns whatever lives.
By every step in life's brief race,
From life itself we part;
Joy dies within the heart apace,
And with it dies the heart.

1 Cor. xv. 32. "If after the manner of men[1] I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die."[2]

Heb. ix. 27. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

Psalm xc. 12. "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

MAY it not be said of the vast majority of mankind that *they live as if they imagined they were never to die?* And yet it is not so. The fact seems rather to be that, aware

[1] *I.e.*, without regard to the retribution of eternity.

[2] This saying of a Greek poet shows the view taken of life by many of the heathen who did not believe in the world to come.

how short is the span that separates them from the confine at which they must surrender and bid adieu to all this earth has given them, they would fain enjoy life while it lasts. "Death makes pale the face," is indeed a weighty truth; but it fares no better than all other such weighty truths when committed to the power of man. If, in the hand of one, it becomes a staff on which he safely leans, in that of another it is transformed into a serpent. Does death indeed, he says, make pale the face? "Well, then, come on, let us enjoy the good things that are present; and let us diligently use the creatures like as in youth. . . . Let us crown ourselves with rosebuds ere they be withered."[1]

But what is this pale death, for on that all depends? Is it the black wall at which the pilgrim halts, and—goes down? Is it the sleep which no dreams disturb? Or is it the dark partition between us and the holy land? Is it the swift moment, the little bridge, on which the brief sleep of time encounters the long awakening of eternity? That black is the wall at which the days of our life terminate is denied by none. Well for him who can discern in it the little door through which the light of the day of judgment throws its purple rays!

Judging by what meets the eye, we might suppose that although the leaves of that door stand always open, the vast majority of mankind had never observed it. Like Belshazzar, they appear to sit at the banquet of life without one thought of the dark and silent hand which is all the while inscribing upon the wall, "*Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting.*" I am persuaded, however, that this is mere appearance. I am confident that there is not a human being whose heart has not, some time or other, felt a presentiment of the terrors of judgment. No one believes that all is over at death, or at least believes it firmly and at all times. And will not what is to ensue thereafter merely resume the thread which was broken here; and if so, will there be no accusers to

[1] Wisdom of Solomon, ii. 6-8.

testify of hours misspent, of privileges abused, of places profaned, of debts unpaid, and hidden secrets of iniquity?

If there be no presentiment of a day of judgment even in the heart of the thoughtless, whence comes their dread of being left alone? This feeling admits of no explanation but the fact that even here on earth there are accusers which, in solitary hours, present to man his unpaid accounts. Or whence, if not from such a presentiment, come the resolutions which so many form, and repeat, and again repeat, to amend their lives and seek out new paths for their feet? Oh that the ability were only as strong as the wish! but

> At thirty man suspects himself a fool;
> Knows it at forty, and reforms his plan;
> At fifty chides his impotent delay,
> Pushes his prudent purpose to resolve—
> In all the magnanimity of thought,
> Resolves and re-resolves, and dies the same.

It is true that serious thoughts like that of the day of judgment do not float upon the surface, and this may be the reason why many a one appears far less concerned than he really is. Let some man of God, however, push the probe deep into the thoughtless heart, and it is soon seen that he touches the quick. No one probably perceived from the countenance of Felix, the Roman governor, that any dread of eternity lingered in his greedy and voluptuous bosom. But if that had not been the case, why do we read that, "as Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time"?[1]

Yes; without a doubt, in the deep despondency which creeps over us all at the thought of separation from the good things of this life, there is always some touch of the terrors of eternity.

> Begin the song of death to sing,
> That solemn parting strain;
> Perhaps this very day may bring
> An end to all thy pain.

[1] Acts, xxiv. 25.

Yes; without a doubt, the awe which these words inspire springs not merely from solicitude about what we leave behind, but likewise from anxiety about what awaits us before. *No one can be happy in this present life unless he be assured of salvation in the life to come.* In former days, when as yet I knew not in what I believed, it used deeply to affect and humble me, while composing long dissertations upon such questions as, Whether the soul is immortal, and what immortality is,—to hear believing Christians speaking upon the subject as confidently as if they had just come from the heavenly land. This was nothing but the fulfilment of the promise, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life," and "*tasteth* the powers of the world to come."[1]

As for the man who has never yet made his peace with God, how can he possibly be happy in this life, seeing that every moment is conducting him farther and farther away from the place which contains all that gives pleasure to his heart? Every tick of the clock, every particle of sand that drops in the hour-glass, proclaims that a fragment of his life, and, with it, of his fortitude and joy, is gone. Dost thou hear the low but mournful lay which the softly-falling grains never cease to sing?—

Behold, O man! and thee bethink
How these, our little sands, that sink,
Life's ebb proclaim.

As one by one we steal away,
So silently does fell decay
Prey on thy frame.

What though our course be still and slow?
No pause by day or night we know,
But ever drop.

And come there will an hour when all
Are gone, and as the last shall fall
Thy pulse shall stop.

[1] John, iii. 36; Heb. vi. 5.

O my soul! is it indeed the case that no man can be happy in this life without the assurance of salvation in the life to come? Be it then thy endeavonr so to live as at the hour of death thou wilt wish to have lived. While time lasts, lay hold on eternity. Above all, lay hold on Him who has said, "Whosoever believeth on me *hath* everlasting life."

5.

We are all alike Sinners.

O God, in man the long-lost power renew
Things of the Spirit to discern and do.

Rom. iii. 22, 23. "For there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

I HAVE never yet met the man who disputed the fact of his being a sinner; but I have met with many who admitted it, and yet lived on in the world as gaily as if it *entailed no further consequences.* When I proceed to inquire how this can possibly be, it always strikes me, as the chief reason, that men do not give themselves leisure—*to reflect.* All around me appear to labour under an indescribable distraction of mind. I cannot otherwise account for the decided manner in which they admit many propositions, and yet do not draw from them the *conclusions* that are obviously manifest. Since the hour in which I first clearly apprehended the one truth that *I am a sinner—against God,* I likewise perceived, as clearly, that there is no business in life so important as to *recover His favour,* and become His obedient child. Before that discovery, it always seemed to me as if my life had no proper aim. It was then that, for the first time, I became aware for what purpose I was living. No doubt I had a certain object, even before, but it

was one of which I felt ashamed, and therefore did not acknowledge even to myself. It was, in truth, to enjoy the things of this world, and to be honoured in the eyes of men. And to thousands at my side, although they too are ashamed to confess it, this is the sole wreath for which they strive. If, however, they would take *time to reflect*, the mere perceptions of the understanding would show them the folly of their conduct. For, supposing our joys and hopes to have their centre in this world, what a painful thought that we are every day withdrawing further away from it! whereas, if eternity be our end and aim, how pleasing to think that to it we are every day advancing nearer! When glory before men is what we seek, we must needs meet with perpetual disappointment. For will the envy of our brethren ever permit us to enjoy such glory unextenuated, or will our vanity ever be satisfied with the measure of it which they allot? But men do not *consider*. And so we see them planting, and building, and toiling, and enjoying themselves. Day after day comes and goes, and the one greatest and most urgent business of life remains undone. The chasm which separates man from his God is not filled up.

We come short of the glory of God, says the Bible; and what is that glory? It is the glory of walking before Him as His children. In his blindness, man, indeed, claims for himself the *privileges*, but he violates the *duties*, of a confiding and always submissive and obedient child. No doubt we hear one and another acknowledging that they are destitute of this glory, but they acknowledge it without shame, and this is just another instance of the fatal effects of not taking sufficient time to consider. For can anything be more natural than that the child who is constrained to confess a want of affection and obedience to his father, should at least feel ashamed when he makes the confession? Even to do that, however, is a great step. I have always found that a sinner is in a hopeful way who has learned to blush.

The sinner's shame and grace of God
Soon enter into brotherhood.

There is no difference, says the apostle. No doubt, what he means, in the first instance, is between Jews and Gentiles. It may likewise, however, be said of all that are born of woman, that there is no difference. However manifold may be the shapes which sin assumes among men, the attentive spectator who contemplates it, whether as existing among the savage children of nature or in polite society, among the old or the young, the learned or the unlearned, will find that it is always the same actor reappearing in different parts. I have made extensive observations upon mankind—I have mixed with all classes of society, and lived with the people of various countries—but never yet have I found a man who had not his weak side. I was continually reminded of the saying of one of our philosophers, that for *every human being there is a price for which he may be bought.* No doubt I have met with many a noble character, who, at the slightest motion of his weak side, instantly took arms against himself. The weak side, however, *was still there.* It is an observation which, in my opinion, needs no very large experience to make, and which, I cannot doubt, any one who duly reflects, and deeply and earnestly searches the recesses of his own heart, must also admit, that man—that is, *every* human being—carries within him the seed of *every* sin ; and this, I think, is the sense in which the apostle has said, " *There is no difference.*"

One thing especially, it appears to me, even the most stubborn must acknowledge—viz., that there is one moral infirmity common to the whole race. *We are all extravagantly enamoured of ourselves.* As Luther says, " There is no hole too little for self-love to creep through." This is a weak side which no one who exercises any measure of self-reflection can disown. Take but a single instance. With what difficulty and reluctance we submit to have our frailties laid open ! How we instantly endeavour to ward off every attempt of this sort, even when made by persons whom we love ! Except those whom the Spirit of God had rendered humble and meek, I never met with any who could readily and cheerfully bear to be told their

faults. What more decisive sign can there be that we all labour under a sore distemper?

I have often cast in my mind what ought to be looked upon as the peculiar mark by which a Christian may be distinguished from a child of the world; and I am persuaded that, far more than in anything else, it is to be found in the difference of the impression made upon him by the words *sin* and *guilt*. For myself, there was a time when I acknowledged that in some, yea, in many things, I came short in the sight of God, and yet I remained quite indifferent about the matter. I could also think with the utmost coolness and unconcern of the hour on which I shall have to appear before Him. I am acquainted with not a few who take no pains about their sanctification, and of whom I yet can conceive that, when they pass into the other world, they will approach the Judge of all as bodily and confidently as if they already held in their hands an order for the rewards of virtue: whereas believing Christians have received the privilege of childship, and yet how bashful and timid they remain!

> Close to Thy throne I seek not, Lord, a place,
> Not even my wish aspires to venture there—
> Grant me but from afar to see Thy face,
> And at Thy threshold breathe my humble prayer;
> And for so great and undeserved a grace,
> To one so vile as me, Thy name I'll praise.

Assuredly that is the sentiment common to the redeemed. It is also mine; for I am conscious how wholly I am destitute of the glory which I ought to have in the sight of God.

My Lord and King, it is true that with Thee no boasting avails. There is, however, a praise and a glory which it behoves us to present to Thee. It is the glory of being Thy obedient children; for when Thou mad'st us after Thine own image, that is what Thou mad'st us to be. Of this glory I confess that I am destitute. But look upon me in mercy, for I am heartily ashamed of my nakedness, and desire to be clothed with the righteousness of Thy Son. Oh, look upon me in mercy for His dear sake!

6.

I was shapen in Iniquity.

Why dost thou still upon the branches gaze?
Believe me, child, 'twere not so bad a case,
If all the mischief centred in the shoot,
And did not issue from the root.

Psalm li. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.—*Verses* 1-3. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me."

HOLY God, before the light of Thy grace had shone upon me, how foreign to me and far away was any earnest desire to have my transgressions blotted out! But now, when conscious of the very slightest aberration from Thy precepts, how uneasily my heart beats! I can find no rest, nor even think of *amendment*, until I have entered my closet and acknowledged to Thee my transgression. Yes; vain is the attempt at *amendment* in the future, until *amends* have been made for what lies behind us in the past. Oh, this sensitiveness of conscience! which sees its sin continually before it, until it has been forgiven. Is not this the surest evidence that the Spirit of the Lord is at work upon the soul? No doubt they denounce it as extravagance when even a little fault gives a man so deep distress. But what says the apostle James? "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."[1] Is not the law with its precepts a body with its members, and each of them animated by the

[1] James, ii. 10.

same soul—viz., the Spirit of God? Yes; the divine commandments are all, as it were, suspended upon a golden thread, which thread is the love of God, and against the *love of God* does he offend who breaks the least of these commandments. Or, as Luther so beautifully says, "The *first* among the ten commandments contains the germ of all the rest." And does not the distinction drawn between great and little sins too often rest upon mere appearance? Tell me, ye who pass so merciless a judgment upon some one great transgression in a human life, have you had so little experience of the power which opportunity and an unguarded moment exercise over man? On the other hand, who does not know that there are impious thoughts in the secresy of the closet, subtle sins of pride which can raise a greater barrier between God and man than the worst sins of the flesh? Was not Luther right when he said that "the *black* devil is often less dangerous than the *white* one"? In fleshly lust there is always more of sensuous passion and less of deliberate consciousness than in spiritual iniquities. I have more than once observed that truly pure and holy souls who would have trembled at even the faintest breath upon the mirror of their own hearts, were easily reconciled to the pardon of a David and a Magdalene. The murmurs came from the gross slaves of vice. Oh, little do such persons understand the mystery of penitential tears! And no less is the compass and the depth of the domain of *subtle sins* hidden from their view. I am persuaded that no one who has actually made this observation, will hesitate for a moment to take his seat on the same penitential bench with David the fallen king, the malefactor, and the Magdalene.

> *Verse* 4. "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest."

Against *Thee*, *Thee only*, have I sinned, is a weighty word, and may be called the true mystery of repentance. In the

case of the *benefits* which we receive from men, we so often look no further than the persons from whom we receive them, in place of carrying forward our thoughts to the supreme benefactor whose ministers men are. We act in precisely the same way with our *sins*. All we think of is the harm which we thereby do to this person or to that, or to ourselves. But, as we have said, there runs a golden thread through all the commandments of God, and for that reason every trespass is an offence against *His love*. The little concern men show about their evil deeds, their unwillingness to take them to heart, must partly, at least, have its origin in their unconsciousness that by every sin they distress their greatest benefactor. Were they aware of this, their chief anxiety would be to obtain forgiveness from Him whom their trespasses most offend. Nor would they less acknowledge the righteousness of a holy God in His judgment upon sin, for they would then see in it more of its true sinfulness.

Verse 5. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."

It is with me as with the Psalmist, the contemplation of each particular transgression always leads me back to the fact that not only are my actions sinful, but that *I* am *myself* a sinner. Luther says that "good works do not make a man good." May not the like also be said of *evil* works? He who attains to a true self-knowledge always feels that the real sting of every misdeed is, that it shows him to himself as one to whom holiness and truth are not supremely dear. When the law of God says, "Thou shalt not kill," it is not my *hand* that is directly addressed, but *myself and my person*. It is therefore his inward bias, inclining either towards God or towards that which is ungodly, according to which a man is accepted or rejected. Such a bias King David feels in his heart, and he does not seek to excuse it on the plea that it is innate. No; his self-condemnation derives all the greater strictness from the consciousness

that at the stem, yea, the very root, of his spiritual life, sin has been gnawing. It is *humanity* that has fallen; and how should not every human being lament the fall!

Oh, how difficult it is for sinful man to come down from the *leaves* and *fruits* of his sin to the knowledge of its *stem* and *root!* not that this knowledge lies afar off; but pride prevents us attaining to it. Justly does Luther say, that this is the most difficult lesson of the Psalm, yea, of the whole sacred Scriptures, and one without which the sacred Scriptures cannot possibly be understood. Such, also, is the persuasion of the Psalmist, for he says:—

Verse 6. "Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom."

He acknowledges that it is the Spirit of God which has inwardly led him to the discovery of his sinfulness in all its depth. And he who has experienced how long the proud heart revolts against such a recognition will readily confess that—

> Unaided by Thy beams, eternal Light,
> To know myself was far above my might.

All amendment, however, must begin with self-acquaintance; and however bitter of itself this hidden truth may be, it is nevertheless grateful to one who cannot bear hypocrisy and falsehood. Painful, also, as to any of us may be an insight into the depth of our corruption, it yet has also a pleasant side. It is always a sign that God is dealing with us, and that the Spirit which reproves the world of sin has taken up His abode in our hearts.

Verses 7-10. "Purge me with hyssop,[1] and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which Thou hast

[1] Levit. xiv. 6.

broken may rejoice. Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

If it be difficult to attain to *a truthful insight into our corruption*, far more difficult is it, after this insight has been attained, to summon up courage enough to enter the presence of God, and ask Him *to forgive us our sins*. The second is doubtless the hardest part of the task. St Bernard says, "The devil does man a double injury; *before* the act of sin he *robs him of shame*, and when the moment for believing comes, he *unseasonably* gives it back." And another father of the Church exclaims —"Oh, how bad a servant is *shame in a beggar's house!*" Is not this the thing which they who have no experience of it find to be so incomprehensible—viz., that Christians on the one hand think their sin and guilt so great, and at the same time, on the other, have such high thoughts of grace? But supposing the case that a man after being so deeply humbled really attains to the unflinching belief that he has obtained mercy, oh then, sooner might the earth remain parched beneath the thunder-shower, than that such a man should not bring forth meet fruits of gratitude and love. No: the apostle speaks of faith purifying the heart;[1] and even so, in fact, does forgiveness of sin make the sinner's heart pure. The right spirit is renewed within him, so that he advances steadily in the path of holiness. When St Paul says that "all things must work together for good to them that love God," the word *all* may be held to include even sin. For does not every new absolution received after the new transgression cut as it were a deeper furrow in the heart, and secure a more favourable bed for the seed of the divine Word? Therefore thus do I also pray—

> Dead are our hearts, those hearts that *Thine* distress,
> Beloved Lord, with sorrows numberless;
> And since *forgiveness* only can revive
> The heart that's dead, do Thou my sins forgive.

[1] Acts, xv. 9.

Cause but one drop of Thy sweet grace to flow,
And oh, what beauteous flowers responsive grow!
Vouchsafe this boon, for, Lord, I deeply feel,
No balm but *grace for grace* my heart can heal.

7.

In many Things we offend.

A foul disease infects humanity,
From which One only of the race was free.

John, viii. 46, 29; v. 30. "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" "And He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please Him." "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."

THERE can be no stronger testimony to the fact that human nature is deeply fallen, than to find, as we do, that in the several thousand years during which the world has been standing, and among the eight hundred millions of men who every thirty years die and are replaced by new births, there has been but one who could say with truth, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" "I do always those things that please the Father." Men are very vain; they are so fond of saying about themselves more than what is true, and yet not one of them has ventured to say *that*. How plainly, then, must our very eyesight teach us the contrary! And how decidedly does our Lord, by this one saying, step out from the ranks of His brethren! When one of us begins to amend his ways, the mark by which this is always known is the readiness

with which he confesses how bad is his case. The holy apostles themselves do not conceal that they still continued sinners. St Paul writes, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after."[1] A John declares, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."[2] And a James confesses, "In many things we offend all."[3] Nor did the blessed apostles spare each other, for a Paul rebukes a Peter "before them all."[4] How completely does the Saviour here step out from the ranks of all the other children of men!

For myself, it is only since His divine image rose before my soul that I have properly learned what is the true state of man. Previously, I always measured myself with the little, and so appeared in my own eyes to be great. Now I measure myself with Him, and have become very little indeed. When we hear a man who thoroughly impresses us with his modesty and truth relate in plain and simple terms some great thing which he has done, we always feel as if we ourselves were thereby humbled; and when the Saviour utters such words as, "I always do the will of my heavenly Father," or, "It is my meat to do the will of Him that sent me,"—and when I think that they are uttered by Him with perfect truth—I then, for the first time, can conceive what a creature made in the image of God ought to be in his Maker's sight, and the relationship in which he ought to stand towards Him. Never before had I figured to myself the appearance of such a human being. And then to think of one so majestically great and spotlessly pure as Jesus, with humility so sincere, inviting sinners to come to Him. Oh, it is this which so powerfully attracts us to His heart—brings us, we know not how, under His yoke—makes us continually recall Him to our thoughts, and take Him as the mirror in which we survey ourselves, and learn thereby to be more and more ashamed. Wondrous is the change we then undergo. We become more and more pure, and yet seem to

[1] Philip. iii. 12.
[2] 1 John, i. 8.
[3] James, iii. 2.
[4] Gal. ii. 14.

ourselves more and more sinful. On the lighter ground the spots are better seen. The clearer the atmosphere, the more distinctly we perceive the outline of all objects. In this way I can well figure to myself how holy John, although he had been so long trained in the Master's school, can yet in extreme old age utter the harsh words, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth;" and was yet, on the other hand, constrained to confess, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

Confession of sin and repentance are generally very painful. When, however, they proceed from the contemplation of one's self in the mirror of the Lord's virtues, it seems as if all the harshness of repentance were taken away, so that it ought no longer to be called by that name, being rather a progressive and ever-growing *sense of shame.* When reproved by the law, we are thrown back upon ourselves, and become really hardened; but when the Lord upbraids us for our faults by His holy example, the effect is rather to mollify and open our hearts, and incline us to surrender ourselves to Him. It is quite like a mirror that reflects its brightness, so as to brighten us when we look into it, and thus we are changed into His image from glory to glory.[1] It is as if He every day probed more and more deeply into our heart with the question, "Lovest thou me?" till not a single stain remains.

Preachers deal so much in reproof, and teachers in exhortation to the young, I am persuaded that if they would only present to us a true portrait of Jesus in His majesty and meekness, His severity and love—if they would but show Him in the depth of His condescension, poverty, and self-abasement —it would be the severest lecture which they could address to men, and would make a far deeper impression than any discourse or exhortation of another kind. The difference is like that in the fable, where the sun and the tempest strove which of them would soonest snatch away his mantle from the tra-

[1] 2 Cor. iii. 18.

veller. In the storm, he only clutched it convulsively, and wrapped himself more firmly in it than before; but under the gentle rays of the sun, he allowed it to drop. Upon myself, no discourse upon repentance makes so deep an impression as when Christ is set forth before my eyes. When I see how in all things He seeks not His own glory, but that of His heavenly Father,[1] I am ashamed of my ambition. When I see how He came not to be ministered unto but to minister, it makes me ashamed of my pride. When I see how He took and drank the cup which His Father gave to Him, it makes me ashamed of my disobedience. When I see how He endured the contradiction of sinners, and when reviled, reviled not again,[2] it makes me ashamed of my impatience and anger. In short, I know of no more powerful discourse upon repentance, at least of none that more melts and humbles me, than the example of my Saviour. Luther speaks to the same effect in words of singular beauty. "*Put ye on the Lord*, says the apostle; and it is a stirring word. For a sorry knave must he be who sees his master fasting and suffering hunger, toiling, watching, and enduring fatigue, while he himself is guzzling and drinking, sleeping, lounging, and living in pleasure. What master could tolerate such behaviour in a servant, or what servant could venture so to behave? The thing is impossible. It must put a man to the blush when he looks to Christ and finds so great a contrast in himself. He who is not warmed, admonished, and stimulated by Christ's example, will certainly never be quickened or excited by anything else. Words will do nothing: compared with that, they are but as the rustling of the leaves to peals of thunder."

It is thus, then, that I pray to Him who is the perfect pattern of all holiness—

> O holy Jesus, fountain of purity!
> What is the rock's clearest crystal to Thee?

[1] John, viii. 49, 50. [2] 1 Peter, ii. 23.

Blessedness dwells in Thy spotless light;
The Cherubim's brightness,
The Seraphim's whiteness,
Fade before Thine to the blackness of night.
My model fair Thou art,
Mould after Thine my heart,
Jesus, my all.
Lord, to Thine arms I flee,
O make me holy and pure like Thee.

O gentle Jesus, how did Thy pliant will
Bend to the Father's, submissive still!
Even to the death Thou didst obey.
In that same way incline
My heart and will to Thine.
Yes, Lord, my self-will take and slay.
Would I were meek and mild,
Ever Thy willing child,
Jesus, my all.
Lo, to Thine arms I flee,
Make me obedient, Lord, like Thee.

8.

He that judgeth me is the Lord.

A guiltless conscience is the best
Of cushions where the head may rest,
No doubt; but when the panel's called
To utter sentence on his fault,
The trial finds a swift conclusion,
And strong the chance of absolution.

1 Cor. iv. 3, 4. "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but He that judgeth me is the Lord."

HOW strange that a man should be his own judge! How marvellous a thing is *conscience!* There is no one who does not shrink from inflicting pain upon himself, and yet we

not only judge, but we *condemn* ourselves. Ought this, however, to go so greatly against the grain, inasmuch as it is really done, not by our own selves, but by another within us? It is impossible that the voice of conscience in man can be his own. Conscience behaves to him as a master does to an unprofitable servant—speaks to him imperatively, and often appears before him as an offended king in his wrath. Many there are who would like to part with it altogether, and think that without a conscience they could lead a much more pleasant life. What is the use of it, they say, except to fill the mind with all kinds of uneasy thoughts and scruples? In this case, however, it is vain to attempt to run away. Conscience cleaves to us like the officer to the convicted criminal, and says, I had to bear with thee, now it is thy turn to bear with me. It is louder than any thunder; and, again, its whisper is gentle and secret, like the murmur of a brook beneath the foliage. It is the secret thing of which Job tells us that it was as an image before his eyes, and passed before his face and made all his bones to shake. "Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof. In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up. It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes; there was silence, and I heard a voice saying, *Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?*"[1]

Like care and death, this secret thing has wings, and wanders through all the earth. Never was heart of man so tough and close as not to have some chink or hole through which it could enter in. This is true even of the heathen. I am one who cannot frown when I see the little dogs eating of the crumbs that fall from their master's table. And it delights my very heart to find that the Word which "lighteth every man who cometh into the world,"[2] has also kindled some few

[1] Job, iv. 12-17. [2] John, i. 9.

sparks in the hearts of the heathen. For I reflect on what the Lord says, "Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" and on the question of Paul, "Is God not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also."[1] Some altars are built of rough and unhewn, and others of polished, stone. Some bear the inscription, To the *unknown* God; others to the *known*. My devotion warms, and good thoughts crowd into my mind, when I read the beautiful testimony which one of the sages of ancient heathenism[2] bears to the conscience. He says: "This is the law which no one can resist, of which no particular clause can be cancelled, and which, as a whole, can never be disannulled. From it no magistracy upon earth, no national decree, can give exemption. It needs no interpreter, and is not one thing at Rome and another at Athens, one thing now and something else hereafter. It is ever one and the same, eternal and unalterable, embracing all nations and ages. And He who is the great Lord and Sovereign of the universe is its maker and interpreter. Whosoever disobeys it flies from himself and subverts his human nature, thereby undergoing the severest of all penalties, although he may escape whatever else is reckoned penal." I have the same feelings when one of their old poets[3] speaks of the "laws which descend from on high—which took not their birth from man's mortal nature—which oblivion will never cover, and in which reigns a great God who never grows old."[4]

When I read such testimonies from the mouth of those whom we call the blinded heathen, I cannot but think that Paul's words will one day be fulfilled, and that the circumcision which has hid its bright and beautiful light beneath a bushel, shall be judged by the uncircumcision which has made its little spark to shine forth in so edifying a manner in the eyes of all the world.

I listen with holy awe to witnesses so grave and reverend; for, from the forcible testimony which they bear to the power

[1] Rom. iii. 29.
[2] Cicero.
[3] Sophocles.
[4] Rom. ii. 14, 15, 27.

of conscience in the human breast, what can be more evident than that it is the cloud above the ark of the covenant, out of which the Lord of hosts Himself addresses the children of men, and preaches to them of truth and righteousness?[1] On the other hand, how great a contrast it seems, when a saint like Paul, though conscious of nothing blameworthy in his conduct, does not on that account reckon himself justified, and will trust only to the judgment of *the Lord!* To the same effect the apostle John writes, "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and *knoweth all things*."[2] Now, doubtless, it is a weighty doctrine that man should yield his entire confidence to no voice of God other than that which addresses him from His *revealed Word.* For who could rehearse all the dreadful extravagances of fanaticism, and the proud and foolish thoughts into which they who have trusted solely to their conscience have fallen? The truth is, that although the voice of conscience be nothing else than the voice of the Lord of hosts, still, in order to hear it aright, man requires previously to possess a spiritual ear, and that is a gift of divine grace through the Holy Spirit; or it may also be said that conscience is the handwriting of the Lord, which it needs a spiritual eye to read. They have invented a kind of ink to write with, but the writing does not become visible until subjected to a certain degree of heat. It is the same with that law which God has inscribed on the tablet of the heart. So long as the flesh attempts, in its own strength, to read it, how laborious is the task! We cannot discover the meaning and put into it pure falsehoods. The word becomes distinct and legible to the reader's eye only when, through the grace of God, the fire of the Holy Spirit is applied to his heart. But, ah me! when that is done, how the letters of the writing, which was before invisible, begin to live and stir! It becomes bright and radiant to the sight, and can no longer be disputed away. Not without cause, therefore, does the apostle Paul, when wishing to lay special weight upon his words,

[1] Exod. xxviii. 30. [2] 1 John, iii. 20.

distrust the testimony of his weak human conscience and prefer thus to write : "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in *the Holy Ghost.*"[1]

For how many thousand souls, especially in these times, has the Father of lies set a fatal net and snare, by darkening and hiding beneath a bushel the truth which is so highly necessary, and so pre-eminently important, for every Christian to know ; I mean, the truth that every conscience remains a blind leader of the blind, so long as it is unenlightened by the Holy Ghost, and has not taken for its rule the revealed Word of God ! It is notorious to all the world that the Father of lies is a great logician ; but he is also, it appears, a fine poet, for he has composed many a tinselled proverb, such as—

> Hear'st thou God's inward call? obey, nor fear,
> However high it points thy bold career.

At last, however, it has turned out that the call came from the lying spirit of pride. And again—

> "In the heart's longing know the voice of fate."

In the end, however, the heart only ran to where it was attracted by the lust of the flesh or by mammon. It is thus that Beelzebub has got for himself a court-dress, that he may make his appearance in good society. O foolish Christians ! if you will not listen to the wise Solomon when he tells you that "he that trusteth his own heart is a fool,"[2] or to the Psalmist when he says that "all men are liars,"[3] at least attend to what one of your own prophets has most wisely averred :—

> Not every voice, I find, is to be trusted,
> That whispers its monitions in the heart.
> The lying spirit, to deceive mankind,
> Oft feigns the accents of fair truth herself,
> And scatters his false oracles around.

No doubt the old oracles cheated many a one, when as yet

[1] Rom. ix. 1. [2] Prov. xxviii. 26. [3] Psalm cxvi. 11.

there was no Word of God in the world. The pity is that they should still keep men in leading-strings in these days when a merciful God has vouchsafed to us the Word of truth, that sure testimony which makes wise the simple.[1] Ye great saints who wear the mask so well, and present to yourselves so large a register of your virtues, would that God would give you grace to see what manner of spirit it is which scatters its oracles so plentifully in your bosom; whether it be the Spirit of truth, of which it is written that it reproves the world of sin, or the spirit of lies! For myself, when I give heed to what my conscience, enlightened by the Holy Ghost, says, all I can hear is that it rehearses the reckoning which God has written out for me in His Word, "Thou shalt have no other God before me." And then says: "Lo, O man, this is what thou art bound to do. Thou oughtest to fear, and love, and honour none but me. Thou oughtest always to put thy trust in me alone, and in every case rely on my goodness. Of all this, however, thou doest the contrary. Thou art at enmity with me. Thou lovest all other things more than me. Thou dost not believe in me with thy whole heart, but art every moment in doubt, and puttest thy confidence in other things."

Lord Jesus, as my natural blindness is so great, I implore of Thee with my whole heart that by Thy holy Word Thou wouldst evermore kindle within me the fire of Thy Spirit, in order that I may more clearly recognise such parts of Thy law as nature has written in my heart. Keep me, gracious God, from the temptations and seductions of my own natural mind, and let Thy holy Word be the sole light of my feet.

[1] Psalm xix. 8.

9.

Blessed is he whose Sin is covered.

Whoever would his ways amend,
Must first be good within,
Therefore thine utmost efforts bend
To cleanse thy heart from sin.

Thou deem'st good works the proper plan
To make thee all thou ought'st to be,
And so the tailor makes his man;
But yet, my friend, I always see,
Unless a man have other worth, that scarce
A fool will stop to look what clothes he wears.

Psalm xxxii. A Psalm of David.—*Verse* 1. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

LET other men rejoice in other things; my joy—a joy which never fails—is this, that in the sight of God my sin is covered. So long as it remained uncovered, I could feel no confidence in presenting myself before Him. I was like one on whose person vice had imprinted its mark, and who is fain to hide his face from the public gaze. Even so, I felt ashamed to be seen of God. To him who knows how great a disfiguration sin is, nothing seems so sad as to hear men congratulating themselves on account of some mean and paltry advantage they may possess, while they are totally unconcerned about the fact that "their sin is not covered."

Verses 2-4. "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer."

How true what the Word of God here avers, that he only can obtain the forgiveness of his sin *in whose spirit there is no guile!* Never is God *gracious* towards us until we are *sincere* towards Him; and because, while here on earth, it is so hard for us to be sincere, the earth is full of saints and heaven full of sinners. Not until conscience had driven its sting deep into his flesh did King David summon up courage to be wholly guileless towards himself and towards his God. So long as our path is smooth we walk on asleep, and, like David, many a one needs a grievous fall to awake him and push the sting of conscience far enough in. No doubt, were we to judge from appearances, we might suppose that in these days of ours the sting had been broken off from the consciences of men,—all look so gay and smiling. I suspect, however, that it still wounds them; but then, if I may so speak, there is a *slow pain of conscience* not perceived to be what it really is, but which, nevertheless, like other slow distempers, exhausts the strength far more than any pain the most acute, for—

> Not when it pierces through, but when it gnaws,
> Does suffering's tooth the keenest anguish cause.

There is a state of mind in which a man thinks nothing right, longs incessantly for change, and, because he has quarrelled with himself, quarrels, or at least likes to quarrel, with all around him. And what is this but the slow pain of an evil conscience, only not understood to be what it truly is? In my own experience I have known several persons who in this manner had long been a torment both to themselves and others, but who, after the morning star of the Gospel arose in their hearts, discovered that all which they had really lacked was the *forgiveness of their sins.* They now looked upon their whole previous life as a time in which they were labouring to conceal from themselves and others a disease that was preying upon their vitals. In such a state a man is ill at ease. Oh, how often smiling countenances are but a mask which conceals weeping hearts, and cheerful looks a mere article of dress put

on when men go into company, in order afterwards, when again alone, to hear, in addition to other reproaches, that of having *belied themselves!* Yes, "blessed indeed is the man in whose spirit there is no guile, and to whom the Lord imputeth not his iniquity." Lord, I will not keep silence before Thee: oh, be not Thou silent to me!

Verse 5. "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

What a moment is that in which a man for the first time hears and fully believes the Saviour's words, "*Thy sins are forgiven thee*"! Among all by whom it has been experienced, who has a tongue sufficiently eloquent to describe it to those to whom it is unknown? It is an exaltation, it is an abasement, and, at the same time, in both a blessedness with which no other state can compare. Ye full and self-satisfied souls, would that you but knew the full import of the word *grace*—grace without desert!

Oh what a mighty word is grace!
How soothing to the stricken heart!
When dropt upon the wounded place,
Like sovereign balm it heals the smart.
When, past a long dark night of grief,
And tears and groanings for relief,
At last comes absolution—
Oh what a boon!

And as we cannot say that we already *are*, but only that we *are always becoming*, Christians, even so it is with absolution such as this. It ought to serve as a horn of salvation, and every day afresh help to raise us up and set us on our feet. Oh that the Holy Spirit would but show me in its true colours the very slightest of my faults, that my soul might take no rest until I have obtained forgiveness! Never has so mighty a *flood* of inward strength caught and borne me along on its wave as in those hours when, kneeling in the silence of my

closet, I felt the Saviour's hand upon my head; and, as the best recompense of my tears, heard Him say—

> From all thy sins I thee absolve.
> Look on me, and believe and rise, my son;
> Be of good cheer, gird up thy loins, and run.

Yes; though before I had only crept, in that hour I obtained strength to *run*. Grasping His hand—the beloved hand that blessed me—I vowed this vow in His presence—

> Yes, Saviour, both my hands I give
> To seal the promise I renew;
> I'll love Thee only while I live,
> And only live to serve Thee too.

Such is the issue of every fresh absolution; and thus, in the school of grace, the inner man really grows stronger and stronger, and we learn the truth of the words: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."[1]

No repentance is really effectual save that which *cheers;* for, to weak and feeble man, what can possibly be so invigorating as joy, especially a joy so tender, so inward, so soul-pervading as that which flows from the consciousness of unmerited grace? If, then, at any time thy knees wax feeble, seek to imbibe strength from joy, and joy from grace.

Verse 6. "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him."

From what source save the firm assurance that we have a gracious and reconciled God, can we derive right confidence in prayer? And hence we find that only holy men who have been justified by grace possess a boldness which enables them to hold free and unconstrained communion with God, as the

[1] Isa. xl. 31.

child does with its mother. In such familiar intercourse they so wholly disburden their hearts of cares and doubts, that the water-floods of affliction, in which so many struggle and some even perish, do not come nigh unto them. A gracious God can confer only graces; and therefore he who has found a gracious God thenceforth receives from Him nothing else but grace, through the medium of all created things, and in seasons of prosperity and adversity alike. As a mother gives the breast to her babe, so to such a soul does God, in all creatures and in all events of life, present a breast from which it can imbibe spiritual nourishment; and he who has advanced so far is for ever beyond the reach of the water-floods.

O Lord, I will not conceal that I have not honoured Thee as I ought to have done. Alas! never have I so honoured Thee all my life. As I did not acknowledge Thine absolute sovereignty over me, so neither for that reason did I appreciate Thy grace. I underlie the curse of a disobedient and perpetually stubborn heart, that would fain always walk in its own ways. How ashamed I would be were other men to see my heart as Thou seest it! and yet, O my God, I am not ashamed before *Thee!* I pass my life unable to elude the conviction that in almost all I purpose and perform, I study solely to serve *myself*, and yet Thou art my Lord, and alone art able to do with me what Thou wilt, seeing that I am the work of Thy hand. If such be the tenor of my life, what wonder that my heart is never tranquil? for who can be at rest who is at enmity with God? So long as I keep silence, anathema is upon me. I will speak—yea, unto Thee will I speak, O my God, and pour out my whole heart before Thee! If washed with mine own hands, I only soil myself anew. Do Thou wash me—yea, wash me every morning afresh!

Wash me each morn afresh in Thy bright flood,
Fountain of Golgotha, for while I groan
Beneath unpardoned sin's oppressive load,
I feel my spirit sink, my vigour gone;
But oh, what life through all my being streams,
When grace bedews afresh my wearied limbs!

There can be no amendment without grace,
No rising up till God forgives the fall.
The flood of mercy must old scores efface,
And in oblivion's ocean whelm them all.
What soldier e'er with heart the fight renewed,
When foes behind were left still unsubdued?

And ask you why this goodly fountain lies
Lonely and unfrequented by the crowd?
It is because whoe'er approaches, spies
His image mirrored on the crystal flood.
He cannot else be healed; but with dismay
That sight the crowd behold and haste away.

10.

Christ was set forth to be a Propitiation.

Mine was the burden which my Saviour bore.

ROMANS, iii. 24-26. "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

PSALM cxi. 4. "He hath made His wonderful works to be remembered: the Lord is gracious, and full of compassion."

"COME hither with your tongues and pens," exclaims Luther, "all ye that have them; sing and play all ye that can, that so we may in some small degree comprehend the import of these words." Oh, how nobly and benignly they are spoken for poor and disconsolate sinners, and for consciences that are wounded and afraid! Here we are told that, now since the Lord Jesus Christ has interposed, we can come

boldly to our God as His children and heirs. A memorial has been erected which proclaims from eternity to eternity the wonders of His compassion. Oh for a voice to sing aloud until the very firmament shall ring—

> Peace, peace, an everlasting peace,
> Discord shall now for ever cease!

Alas! how seldom in these poor days of ours do we hear such joyful exclamation bursting from the hearts of exulting Christians! It is enough to make one weep to see so many precious gifts of God lying neglected and despised, and none caring to use them with thankfulness and praise. But what is that compared with the pang which wrings the heart when we think that God has torn from His bosom His darling, His only child and dearest life, and delivered Him up for sin; and yet that men despise even so divine a gift? In Israel, the mercy-seat was erected upon the lid of the ark of the covenant—that ark in which was contained the covenant law, so often broken by the many transgressions of the people; and yet even there had their gracious and merciful God set up a memorial, and accepted the blood of the sin-offering when sprinkled upon it, covering in this manner with the shadow of His grace the violated law and all its threatenings against transgressors. But oh, how much better is that which the Lord, gracious and full of compassion, has provided for *us!*[1] Theirs was but a "*shadow of good things to come;*"[2] ours is the living mercy-seat which He has now erected on Golgotha and Gethsemane, and from which there is a direct way to the sanctuary of His heart!

How is it possible for men to pass by this mercy-seat and for a moment entertain the thought that it is a mere useless *ornament* to the sanctuary? Yes, a mere ornament it may appear to them so long as they have yet to cross the threshold within which alone it can be rightly seen. The mercy-seat of the New Testament is indeed a mere ornament—a carved work of cedar—*until a man has been brought to concede the right*

[1] Heb. xi. 40. [2] Heb. x. 1.

of God to condemn him; in other words, so long as he draws near with any sort of advantage which he counts his own. None can possibly behold its glory unless they be naked and bare. There is a strait gate to be passed on the way to it, and outside of this lie heaps of counterfeit pearls, robes of false silk and embroidery of tinsel; because they who enter must leave behind them all things they count their own, and so the more of these they have to take off, the longer they are in passing through. There is a true and pleasant story told of one of those who are wont to array themselves largely with the robes of self-righteousness. He had deeply lamented over a brother, who was a true child of God, but whom, as one who had abjured all personal merit, he regarded as a mean fellow, while fancying himself to be eminently holy and good. To this person divine grace vouchsafed a dream. It seemed to him, as he slept, that he looked through a narrow door and saw his brother, who had meanwhile departed this life in peace, seated at table with all the saints in a great and beautiful hall. Not a little surprised, he made haste to enter the door, in order if still possible to uproot the tare that had crept in among the wheat. But mark what happened. The strait door became ever straiter and straiter about him, and he was obliged to put off every article of dress, one after another, until nothing was left but a single silken napkin of great worth, which he had wrapped about his body. Oh then, what striving and straining there was to take this precious article inside along with him! But all his efforts were vain, until he left it behind; and only when he had stripped himself perfectly bare could he force his way through. On awakening he made the dream a subject of serious reflection, and subsequently the grace of God changed his heart. O my fellow-men, ye who have never yet been able to see the mercy-seat in its glory, is it not because such silken napkins are too common among you?

Ah me! how stoutly men resist before they can be brought to divest themselves of all that is their own! I did so myself, O Lord; I resisted when Thy law proclaimed that the "Lord

is a holy and a jealous God. He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins."[1] I would not submit to be *condemned.* In my heart, however, Thy Spirit has affixed His seal to the testimony of the letter of Thy law, so that I cannot contend with Thee, and must acknowledge the justice of Thy sentence. Behold, then, I confess that it is wholly just. For even wert Thou in Thy wrath to destroy me, I should be compelled to say, "Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment."[2] O Lord, like Job, I have ventured to dispute with Thee, and to say, "Oh that one would hear me! Behold, my desire is, that the Almighty would answer me, and that mine adversary had written a book;"[3] for while I seemed righteous in my own cause, Thy judgments were too heavy for me, I could not bear them. But Thou, "who with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, and makest his beauty to consume away like a moth,"[4] hast tried my reins in the night season, chastened my heart by Thy Spirit, and set my secret sin before mine eyes, so that I was constrained to confess with Job, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."[5] Yes, Thou God of justice, *I acknowledge myself to be guilty in Thy sight*, and "that it is the *foolishness* of a man which perverteth his way, and his heart fretteth against the Lord."[6]

That Thou art *just* in all Thy ways,
None of Thy servants, Lord, gainsays.
Though by Thy terrible award
Down to the burning gulf I'm thrust,
My voice shall 'midst the flames be heard
Proclaiming, "*This my doom is just.*"
Yet, Lord, to make Thy glory known,
By acts severely just alone,
Were little for a God like Thee.
Thy matchless greatness to express,
Transcendent King! let *mercy* be
The partner of Thy righteousness.

And this hast Thou done—Thou hast fed the hungry,

[1] Josh. xxiv. 19. [2] Job, xxxiv. 12. [3] Job, xxxi. 35.
[4] Psalm xxxix. 11. [5] Job, xlii. 6. [6] Prov. xix. 3.

Thou hast given drink to them that were athirst, and clothed the naked. Yes; when I appeared all naked in Thy sight, how rich and beautiful were the garments with which Thou didst clothe me! O blessed Jesus, so close is the fellowship into which Thou hast entered with man, that to Thyself, from us on whom they lay, Thou hast transferred all the penalties of transgression, and instead hast given to us Thyself with all Thy purity and holiness to be possessed as our own. Sin, death, and Satan, to harm me now is beyond your power. Henceforward you have to do with one who is stronger than I, for I am my Lord's.

O wounded head! with thorns so vilely crowned,
Since Thou Thyself so close to man hast bound,
That all of Thine to me no less pertains,
No human tongue can well express,
No human fancy rightly guess,
The strength which from the head the member gains.

I have part in the anguished sweat of Gethsemane, and in the sacred blood that was shed on Golgotha. I have part in the cry, "I thirst;" and in the appeal, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Mine is Thy descent into hell, and mine Thine ascension into heaven; for have we not been made "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones"?[1] To the natural mind, no doubt, it seems to pass all bounds of belief that one who but a little ago was sunk so deep in hell, should at once be admitted into heaven, and take a seat at table with Him who is the eternal God and Sovereign of the universe. But faith is not the business of the flesh. It is the work of the Holy Ghost, by which "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts."[2] "It seems," says Luther, "quite incredible to the *conscience*. Conscience takes upon it to condemn all my *good works*, and all my own *righteousness* in the sight of God: but I can say to it I have none of either; for who can pluck hair from the palm of his hand, or pay money from an empty purse? All that is good

[1] Eph. v. 30. [2] Rom. v. 5.

and holy about me belongs to my *Master*. If, again, conscience accuses me of *sin*, I reply, Neither have I any of that, for Christ has taken and carried it away. O conscience! thine accusing office is gone, if so be that thou makest other charge or complaint against me save this alone, that I do not sufficiently embrace the Lord Jesus, who is now my righteousness and my life. They tell us of a poor fellow who one night caught a thief in his house, and mocked him, saying, What a fool thou must be to fancy that in a dark night thou couldst find anything where I myself can find nothing in the light of day! Even so the believer who has no longer either sin or holiness of his own answers, when the accuser stands up against him: Here there is nothing to find but Christ alone."

Beloved Master! now that by Thy precious blood Thou hast become such a mercy-seat for me, I hear a voice which from dawn till eve resounds from it and says, *This I did for thy sake, what doest thou for mine?* Oh, how strong is the bond of affection which such blood-besprinkled love winds around the lover and the loved! How many millions have already loved Thee with a purity of affection which far excels that of child or woman, so that in a moment they would have gladly sacrificed their life for Thine! As Thou hast thus given Thyself to me, and become mine, what other return can I make than to give myself to Thee, and become Thine? Yes, Jesus, me also Thou mayest now take and use as Thou wilt.

He is mine, and His am I,
Bound by an everlasting tie.
For since He gave
Himself to death
My soul to save,
For Him I'll live, for Him resign my breath.

But couldst Thou possibly have knit Thy followers to Thee by a bond of love so strong if Thou hadst appeared among us, as some will have it, Thou didst appear, solely as a *Teacher?* If in place of taking upon Thee our poor flesh and blood, with all the bitter pains of death to boot, Thou hadst come amongst us as a blessed Spirit, and again departed as such, without leav-

ing behind Thee to Thy friends anything but *Thy words*—O Lord, forgive me for saying it, beautiful are Thy words, yea of surpassing beauty, but still more beautiful are Thy works !—in that case, no doubt, we might have gazed after Thee into Thy heaven of glory; but ah ! our hearts would have lingered here on earth. Oh, if even among us men it is only *the love that makes a sacrifice* that begets a true affection, surely none can doubt that only upon a *blood-besprinkled* path could we have found an entrance into Thy heart, and that only a *crucified* love could have riveted the hearts of men so closely to itself.

What loathsome body's this that meets my gaze?
A foul disease on all the members preys;
None of them can or help or heal the rest,
With its own ills opprest.

It is *humanity*, and, dismal plight !
Without a head it lies, and shocks the sight:
The anguished cry for succour never ceases,
Yet still the plague increases.

But lo ! a glorious Head from heaven descends,
Whom neither sore nor putrid breath offends;
His heart on what was *sick* He sets, and it
To His own self doth knit.

Yes,—dearly has the Head the body loved,
Sickness and death from every limb removed;
With *vigour* from His own the faint imbued,
The dead with *life* renewed.

11.

The Lord's Love is everlasting.

In all that me befell since life began,
I now can trace a thread which mercy span.

Jer. xxxi. 3. "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."

WHEN we have come to understand the reason why we live, and distinctly perceive the end and aim of existence here on earth, it is a pleasant task to trace back the path by which the divine goodness conducted us, and to observe that it was all wisdom and all love. The great majority of the race never think of inquiring what is man's chief end; and they who do, make the inquiry so difficult to themselves, pore over it so long, use all manner of optical instruments, which only confound plain common-sense; and yet the truth lies within their reach, and is evident to view. If, then, there be few who succeed in finding it, although the Bible declares that "God layeth up sound wisdom for the *sincere*,"[1] the number of those who are sincere towards themselves must be small. And true it is that men do lie to themselves; nor of the lies they tell is there any more manifest than when they affirm, as they are always doing, that the purpose for which they are here is to work for *others*. No one, however, can work for others except in so far as he has himself *experienced a work* of God. O ye hypocrites! how can you really love others, seeing you have so little love for *yourselves?* You do not love them. What you love is your own life, or, as the poet calls it, the pleasing habit of existing and acting.

Full many a day and many a weary night,
With busy zeal you toiled to chase away;
And mirthful stories heard and told which might
Beguile the sense of lagging time's delay.

And was this wrong? you ask, and boldly show
Your reckoning to the world's great Judge and Lord,
Appealing to His justice to bestow
On virtue so severe its due reward.

Ye fools! how will the hearts within you die,
When from the mouth that never speaks in vain,
The irrevocable sentence forth shall fly,
Your due reward was given you, why complain?

[1] English version *righteous*, Prov. ii. 7.

Play was the good supreme your heart desired,
And to the full you had it all your days;
But now, behold, the term for play expired,
Eternity its awful scenes displays.

Is it any wonder, then, that having nothing but working, and working for others, solely and continually before their eye, men should complain in their delusion "that God hedges up their way with thorns,"[1] that He has tied their hands, that they are living in vain, being forced to stand idle in the market-place? Why is it that in this particular instance they forget what in others they remember so well, *that every man's nearest neighbour is himself?* In fact, the widest field for active exertion is that which is closest to us, and lies in our own bosoms. Even a whole lifetime spent upon a sick-bed gives the amplest scope for activity. Let a man have come to see that the grand object in life is to spend its brief span in becoming a tree in the garden of God, verdant with foliage, and loaded with all the noble graces called by St Paul "the fruit of the Spirit," which are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance,"[2]—I repeat, he who has come to see this, will find in every situation of life a noble sphere for exertion.

When by the help of grace, however, this discovery has been made, the man then learns also to see a plan and purpose in the whole course of his life, and at each new stage of it sees this more and more clearly. As we advance in years, it is as if we were ascending a terraced height from every higher elevation of which our view becomes more comprehensive, and all the objects it embraces seem more connected with each other. And oh what a prospect it will be at last, when, having reached the summit, we can overlook the whole!

"*The Lord hath appeared of old unto me.*" O Lord, under how manifold and various disguises, and upon how many different paths, one after another, hast Thou gone forth to meet me in order that perchance mine eye might recognise and my heart might find Thee! Many a time, like the disciples of Emmaus,

[1] Hos. ii. 6. [2] Gal. v. 22.

I felt my heart burning within me, and yet my eye was holden that I knew Thee not. Now, however, I know Thee under all disguises, now I see Thee upon every way. Yes, it is a blessing to have been bred within the precincts of the Christian Church—a blessing even in our own days, when the walls of Zion are so sadly broken down. When I look back in thought, oh how many impressions of the Spirit of Christ I have, as it were, unconsciously and involuntarily received! In fact I can say that *His* maternal bosom began to give me *spiritual* nourishment almost as soon as that of my mother to nourish me *bodily*. The prayers my parents taught me, the example of many pious men, all I learned of the history of the Church of Christ, the religious instruction I received, the many sermons I heard, and the manners of the Christians with whom I lived, —all these exercised their influences upon me; and when at last, oh Love eternal, Thou didst actually take me to Thy heart, and I gazed upon Thee face to face, then were all these several beams of love condensed into one, and the light which fell upon the present illumined to me also the past and the future.

Judging from my own experience, I am disposed to believe that in the life of every man there are, before conversion, many more traces of Christian grace than he himself knows or imagines. It is as with the light which exerts upon us a quickening influence, though we do not observe whence the quickening comes. It is as if we then saw the Saviour through a veil, and all that conversion does is to take the veil away. We may possibly have doubts about a truth which yet we cannot deny, and may, as the apostle expresses it, *be apprehended* of Christ, without our *apprehending* Him. There is a *precursory* grace which penetrates and takes hold of a man without his being aware of it. And so it was, O my God, that when as yet I knew Thee not, Thou didst with "*loving-kindness draw me to Thee.*"

O Love eternal, who Thy depths can sound?
Ages before my mind on Thee could think,
Ages before my heart in Thee could sink,
Thy holy effluence compassed me around.

Who can Thy depths explore, O Love divine?
As gently and mysteriously the light
Falls on the suckling's eyes, unused to sight,
So didst Thou enter this cold heart of mine.

"*Thou hast loved me with an everlasting love*," for Thy love is older than my life. Thou didst love me before I existed, for it was because Thou didst love me that I now exist. Before the world was created Thou didst call me by name, and Thou didst create the world with an eye to me, the poorest of Thy children, in order that, along with all the millions who at my side advance to the goal of consummation, I too might find a path to conduct me to the same. Oh what confidence, what fortitude, what magnanimity are inspired by the thought that I too was thought of in this world of God, and that for me, among the rest, it was prepared! Brave and determined does the soldier enter the conflict when he knows for certain that the general whose eye surveys the field has reckoned upon him also being at his post. Even though he fall, he knows he is in his right place. Like him, I too know that He, whose eye of affection overlooks the universe, has assigned to me my station, and traced out for me my path. Onwards I march through perpetual vicissitudes of brightness and gloom, and the issue is as yet hidden from my view. But the eye that knows no change, beholds it from eternity to eternity in a light that is ever the same.

"*Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son; moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified. Who shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?*"[1] Away from earth, O my spirit! Away from this sojourn in dim twilight where nothing is, but all is in the act of being! Sink into thy source. Before that never-changing eye, which across the flight of ages beholds the consummation of all things, Thou also dost stand made perfect.

[1] Rom. viii. 29, 30, 39.

Yes! before that eye I am already justified, sanctified, and glorified. Already does the crown adorn my brow, though here I still bear the cross. What is faith? Is it not the eye that sees the invisible things? Is it not the anchor that entereth into that within the veil?[1]

All this hast Thou done in *loving-kindness* alone. What else, indeed, could have been Thy motive, seeing that Thy love is older than my life? As Thou hast first given to us whatever we can give thee back in return,[2] so likewise are all the ways by which Thou hast led us *loving-kindness*, and nothing else.

Even now, my soul, see thy salvation wrought,
Thy sorrow turned away, thy battle fought;
Even now in spirit the Saviour's throne thou sharest,
Even now in spirit the crown of glory wearest.

Offspring of time, ye fleeting cares, adieu!
To-morrow, yesterday, I've done with you;
In vast eternity's domain I live,
Where God to me will bliss eternal give.

12.

I resisted ignorantly in Unbelief.

Why art Thou not by all adored?
Because they do not know Thee, Lord.
Hadst Thou to me Thy beauties shown,
Thee, Thee I would have loved alone.

1 Tim. i. 12-14. "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, be-

[1] Heb. vi. 19. [2] Rom. xi. 35.

cause I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."

AND so blasphemers, persecutors, and revilers were the kind of persons whom Christ invited into His kingdom! Nay, it was far worse; for though to many it may seem a dangerous thing to say, still the Lord himself has averred that "publicans and harlots"—that is, the vilest slaves of sin—are more welcome to become His subjects than the specious saints who deem themselves superlatively good.[1] No wonder, then, that even on this earth these paragons of virtue decline to hold fellowship with the maimed, and the halt, and the blind, whom the Lord sent His messengers into the streets and lanes of the city to invite,[2] and when they meet them keep some paces aloof. Well, then, measures have been adopted that also in the world to come you will run no risk of being defiled by such low company; for, when translated there, between you and them you will find a great gulf fixed.

The Lord our God, however, as Luther says, is an Artist who delights only in difficult masterpieces, and cares not for plain carving. He is also specially fond of working from the block, and therefore always chooses the hardest timber and stone on which to display the perfection of his skill. This has been His custom from the earliest times. Even the people which He chose out of all the nations of the earth for His own, and of which He said, "My dove, my undefiled is but one,"[3] was a very raven. Alas! too often they forgot the Father who had led them out of the wilderness, and in pure mercy and loving-kindness brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey. And doubtless, hereafter, when we shall be walking through the streets of the heavenly Jerusalem, many a lofty palace built of the most precious stones shall we behold. But methinks the fairest ornament of them all will be the motto engraven upon the porch—

[1] Matt. xxi. 31. [2] Luke, xiv. 21. [3] Song of Sol. vi. 9.

Immersed in miry pits profound,
His chosen folk the Saviour found,
And brought them to this glorious place,
To show the wonders of His grace.

For such is the inscription which must stand upon every house of which the Lord is the builder.

Accordingly Saul was a stone superlatively hard; but the very hardest of stones, if it strive with the Lord, must prove brittle as a potter's vessel, and be dashed to pieces. Is it not written, "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will *grind him to powder*"?[1] Hear also the words of Luther: "Christ speaks and says, Good people, beware of meddling and embroiling yourselves with me. If you do, I plainly tell you that I am a stone, and will not be afraid of the pots, however big-bellied they be, and however they may blow themselves out, as if they meant to terrify me with their wrath and threatening. The bigger and the more inflated they are, the sooner will they be struck, and the more easily broken." "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks," spake the Lord Jesus to Saul. And although Saul resisted, he was compelled to submit; for it is written, "The strong shall be assigned to Him as a prey."[2]

But hard although he was, Saul was not for that reason of the worst quality of stone; otherwise, in my opinion, the heavenly Architect would not have specially chosen and preferred him. Certainly he was neither mud nor clay, like the dissemblers and hypocrites of whom we read so much in the Gospel. Though belonging to the same sect, he was not one of those Pharisees[3] who strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel—"paid tithes of mint, anise, and cummin, but omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith"[4] —and who were, no doubt, like himself, zealous against Christ and His doctrine, but were so for their own glory, and not for the glory of God. Neither was Saul a Simon the sorcerer, who, when Philip preached the Gospel and wrought miracles,

[1] Matt. xxi. 44.
[2] Isa. liii. 12—Luther's vers.
[3] Acts, xxvi. 5.
[4] Matt. xxiii. 23.

attended to the miracles and not to the preaching; and, even in the former, had regard solely to the profit which might be reaped by him who *performed*, and not to that which would accrue to him who *believed* in them. Just as little did he follow the example of those moral heroes of the modern school, who, by cunning arts of exposition, contrive to obliterate the clearest language of the divine commandments. On the contrary, into conflict with these divine commandments he honourably entered, and maintained it until his strength was wholly spent. According to the account of himself which he has bequeathed to us in the 7th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, he had a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge; and even while persecuting Christ, did it with a good intention, deeming it a service rendered to God.[1] Now that is the quality of the timber which our God still uses for the carpentry of His temple. Of the self-same sort, as I think, was the malefactor on the cross. The hypocrite gazes up at him with astonishment, and imagines that that person got into Paradise at far too cheap a rate. Mark, however, what the entrance cost him. There was a strait gate through which it behoved him, as it behoves all, to pass, and to leave outside both his sins and his holiness; and this the malefactor did when he spake to his accomplice saying: "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? *And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds:* but this man hath done nothing amiss." See here, ye moral heroes, the ditch which you require to clear! It consists in the confession, "*We are in the same condemnation, and indeed justly.*"[2] A very brief sentence is this, but it is like a hole pierced in a sheet of paper, through which the eye can see the whole firmament. Even so it is with the heart. If it understand but the little word *repentance*, though ignorant of every other virtue, through that all heaven enters in.

There must therefore be agreement between Paul and James, when the one says, "By the grace of God I am what

[1] Rom. x. 2; Gal. i. 13, 14. [2] Luke, xxiii. 40, 41.

I am;"[1] and the other admonishes, "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you."[2] And again, between the Lord's address to Paul, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks," and what He elsewhere avers—viz., "Every one who is of the truth heareth my voice." And so there is. Saul himself had been drawing near to God, although in a wrong way; and while yet in bondage to the law, and labouring under spiritual blindness, was, notwithstanding, of the number whom the Lord describes as being "of the truth." For though he still blasphemed the name of Jesus, such was the temper of his mind that everything with him depended upon his knowing for certain that the Lord had spoken. After ascertaining that, never did he fail to say Amen. This he did in the instance before us. For the moment he is convinced that it was the Lord who called him, he is ready with the answer, "What wouldst Thou have me to do?" And for this reason he alleges, as a great consolation to himself, that he did what he did "*ignorantly in unbelief.*"

Yes, my Saviour, and that is what I too can say like him. I did it ignorantly when I did not recognise Thee in Thy servile disguise; I did it ignorantly when Thou didst meet me in the way and I haughtily passed Thee by; I did it ignorantly when Thou didst court me for my heart and I refused to give it Thee. At the same time Thou also knowest that all this was done in ignorance, and for that reason Thou wouldst not accept the repulse, but didst return again and again to knock at the door, and try if it were still barred. The more the spell of my sin dissolved, the more didst Thou disclose to me the charm of Thy love; and then how could I any longer fail to see that to reject *Thee* is to reject *salvation?* In this way Thou didst ever more and more enrich me; and when at last the hour came, and Thou didst reveal Thyself to me in all Thy majesty and beauty, I then surrendered myself wholly to Thee, and with Thee found at last all that I had so long, and with such unquenchable desire, been seeking on every hand.

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 10. [2] James, iv. 8.

Thou art, O Lord, too strong for me; I yield,
For who with Thee can cope? When in the field
Thy banner waves, the very mightiest must
Before Thee, conquering hero, lick the dust.

What strange delusion compassed me about!
Methought 'twas with my bitterest foe I fought;
The spell dissolved, and, petrified with woe,
I saw of friends the dearest in that foe.

O Love, that won me in the fiery fight,
How did I still with scorn Thy toils requite!
Pardon I crave—I *knew* not who Thou wert,
Or none but Thee had ever won my heart.

13.

Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Full many a fathom down I went
In learning's mines obscure,
And studied day and night intent,
Her treasures to secure.
But all in vain! Till Wisdom[1] *spake,*
He who would win me for a wife
Must with the heart his courtship make;
KNOWLEDGE IS BUT THE MIRRORED FORM OF LIFE.

JOHN, xiv. 6. "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

JOHN, vii. 17. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

MATT. v. 8. "The pure in heart shall see God."

Disciple.—It is written, "He that believeth not shall be damned."[2] Does this mean, he that *will not* believe although he *can*, or he who *cannot* believe although he *will*?

[1] The divine wisdom manifested in Christ.—Matt. xi. 19; Luke, xi. 49.
[2] Mark, xvi. 16.

Master.—And who, then, cannot believe?

D.—He who has experienced the truth of the apostle's averment that "Faith is not given to every man."[1]

M.—You know, however, who they are *to whom* faith is given?

D.—I know a class to whom it certainly is not. It is not given to them who want to *see* before they *believe.*

M.—And I know to whom it is given. It is given to them who *hunger and thirst.* Do you hunger and thirst?

D.—Why should I not?

M.—For many reasons that might be assigned, and for this, among others—no one hungers who is full. Is that the case with you?

D.—No.

M.—What then do you lack?

D.—I cannot rightly express it; but, if you please, I will say, The instrument is out of tune.

M.—What! have you already advanced so far? Tell me, now, which of the strings is sprung.

D.—Perhaps more than one.

M.—But do you not know the Artist whose hand can mend the broken ones, and put in tune those that have lost the pitch?

D.—Yes, and No; for He whom you mean has made a condition with which I cannot comply.

M.—What is it?

D.—"*Not to see and yet to believe.*"[2] I set a great value upon my eyes.

M.—For the present put that aside, and answer me this question, can any one tune the strings unless he has the true pitch within himself?

D.—No other can.

M.—What, then, think you of Him who has put the stone of stumbling in your way? Has He the true pitch within Himself?

[1] 2 Thess. iii. 2—Luther's vers. [2] John, xx. 29.

D.—I cannot answer No; for there is that about Him which might well make one believe that He has.

M.—What is it?

D.—Well, sound and colour are sister-streams from the same hill. What the verdure of the fresh-sown field in spring is to the eye—something on which it reposes with complete satisfaction—that, I confess, in many a quiet hour on which no eye but Heaven's looked down, has been to my spirit the contemplation of His image. I must confess that I then felt as if I had reached the summit of a hill so lofty that around its tranquil crown the storms are silent.

M.—It almost seems to me that while your *words* dispute, your *knees* already bow to the Son of God and man.

D.—There, we are again upon different roads. Do you mean the Son of God who ascended from earth to heaven, or the one who came down from heaven to earth?

M.—In His own Word I read: "No man hath ascended up to heaven but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven;"[1] and again: "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God *ascending and descending* upon the Son of man."[2] I do not, therefore, understand the distinction which you draw. Moreover, a man can receive nothing, except it be given him from on high.[3] Can he manifest God to whom God has not manifested Himself?

D.—You express what I think; and as for bending the knee—

> Why should the knee not bend to all that's fair,
> If God's bright image glows reflected there?

M.—That, my son, is a posture in which I rejoice to see you.

> Bold and erect we stand upon our feet,
> When for support on our own strength we lean.
> 'Tis meet that he should *kneel* who must *receive*.

As you acknowledge Him to be the only One who has the true pitch within Himself, you will also accredit Him with the

[1] John, iii. 13. [2] John, i. 51. [3] John, iii. 27.

power to put others in tune, and will be willing *to receive* at His hands.

D.—Yes, I would like it much, only I love my eyes.

M.—And so do I. But you do *see;* and your own words testify that what you see is something amazingly great.

D.—Yes, I see a mystery; and therefore, with eyes that see, I am still blind.

M.—Does the compass less safely show the mariner the way through the stormy waves because it is a hidden mystery to him why it points to the north?

D.—He is the *Way*—that I have long known; but He himself says that He is the *Truth.*

M.—And because He says it that also will be true. Not only is He the Truth, but He is likewise the *Life.* If, then, He promised to you also the truth, why do you not trust Him?

D.—I confess I saw a Way, but I have not found the Truth.

M.—You say, I *saw* and have long *known* the Way; but did you also *follow* it?

D.—Ought I to blush if I answer that I did not? O master! I boldly aver before thee and all the world that Wisdom is the great goddess to whom I pay my court.

M.—And so you love the *Life* only to *know* it?

> Yours is indeed a curious taste,
> Content to *smell* rather than *eat* the feast.

D.—You disparage my goddess, and yet I am not ashamed of her. Would that in her majesty she were not ashamed of me! *Knowledge*—the word is far from expressing that for which my soul longs with a burning thirst. One may know all things by rote—God, angels, the world; but that which we merely know by rote, neither satisfies nor tranquillises the mind. No; not for so paltry a prize as that did my soul sue. The knowledge for which I sued is of so inward a kind, that were the firmament itself to become a book, and every star a letter, I should still deem it far too small. I will learn the

knowledge for which I long from no volume but my own spirit. I have a boding impression of its being of so vast a compass, that all that is in heaven, and all that is in the heart of the Only-begotten, and all that is in the heart of God Himself, will be comprehended in it. And what say you to the Master's own averment, that "This is life eternal, that they might *know* Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent"?[1]

M.—Several things I should have to say. But now I shall say but one. If *life* be the offspring of *knowledge*, what if knowledge itself be the offspring of *faith*, and of faith alone? What if the correct order be, as St Peter shows, "We *believe* and are *sure*"[2] (surely know); or, as it is expressed in the words of the prophet, "I will even betroth thee unto me in *faithfulness* (faith), and thou shalt *know* the Lord"?[3]

D.—Methinks that way a hard one.

M.—It has often happened that a man has confided in a loving hand, and, when bidden, has gone the way it led blindfold, until the time came to take the bandage from his eyes. You say the way is hard, but, my son, it is you who are indiscreet. *You* refuse to trust *Him*, and yet require of *Him* to trust *you*. Do you not know what is written,—"The secret of the Lord is with them that *fear* Him"?[4]

D.—I can only repeat that faith is a beautiful child, if only it were not *blind*.

M.—Do not sin, my son. Faith is not blind; for how could it possibly *love* if it did not see? Its eyes are not bound; for what says the apostle,—"Now we see through a glass darkly"?[5] Accordingly, faith sees its own objects—nay, it also sees something more; it sees *why* it believes. And tell me, you whose eyes have gazed upon that One who of all the human race alone bears the true pitch within Him, can you say that in trusting Him you did not know the reason why?

[1] John, xvii. 3 [2] John, vi. 69. [3] Hos. ii. 20. [4] Psalm xxv. 14.
[5] 1 Cor. xiii. 12. The ancients had metal mirrors, which showed the objects less distinctly than is done by ours.

D.—No doubt I saw a reason faintly and partially. But, after all, dear master, faith is still a bitter morsel.

M.—Bitter only where love is lacking. He who loves relies. You love Him not; and you do not love Him although you say that of all beings He is the most worthy of love.

D.—In your opinion, then, the way to knowledge lies through *faith and love?*

M.—So I think, and so Christ says; for *all knowledge is but the mirror of life.*

D.—Be not displeased if I once more take refuge in His own words: "This is life eternal, that they might *know* Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."

M.—The buckler breaks. The life eternal was certainly present in the Church long before the knowledge after which you aspire. "We know," says St John, "that we have passed from death unto life." The knowing spoken of in Scripture is a *tasting*. "We have *tasted* the good word of God and the powers of the world to come."[1] "*Taste* and see that the Lord is good."[2] In those days when the Light of the world shone upon the Church, a garden of the Lord sprang up, and every tree in it was adorned with golden fruits. But what grows beneath the beams of the light which you see? However near the sun may be, still, if its rays fall *obliquely*, the winter lasts and not a flower blossoms. And with you it fell obliquely, and not in the centre, which is the *heart.*

D.—You nearly vanquish me, for you are mighty in the Word of God; and what that means I now can no longer doubt. Must we then begin from *below?*

M.—Where else can he who has *fallen* begin? Properly speaking, however, faith is rather *innermost* than *undermost*, and it gives light both up and down. Mankind have lost the cheerful ring of peace; and in what other way can they recover it save that in which it was lost? We fell by *disobedience*, and only by *obedience* do we regain our feet. To believe is to obey. I know of only one test which the Lord has proposed to them

[1] Heb. vi. 5. [2] Psalm xxxiv. 9; 1 Pet. ii. 3.

who ask of Him a test. It is: "*If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.*" "*The pure in heart* shall see God." You have aspired after a knowledge not merely to be known to you by rote, but possessed as more your own than all else. But is not such a knowledge external only so long as your own being belies the testimony of your knowledge? You wished to unite yourself in wedlock with the lofty goddess Wisdom, and forgot what she herself declares: "I love those that *love* me;" and, "My son, give me thine heart."[1] You wished to *wed* her, and yet are ignorant of the holy mystery of wedlock, which is, "*that they two shall be one flesh;*"[2] and yet you were not willing to share with her so much as your heart, but only *your thoughts.*

D.—Let a wise man correct me; it is as wine poured into my wounds. Let him smite me; it is as ointment upon my head.

M.—I have not yet done. Something I have still to say respecting the *final issue.* How is it possible for us to reach it, even with our knowledge, so long as it is written, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be"?[3] The apostle has said, not merely of this or that individual, but of *all* of woman born, "Now we see through a glass darkly." It cannot therefore be *faith* alone that sees in the dim glass, but also *knowledge, and that in an equal degree*—the knowledge which is taught in the schools of earth. Where is the man who does not hold his breath when he contemplates the goal which beckons us at the consummation of all things? "Then, however, I shall know *even as I am known* (of God)." And thou, fettered at every inch of the way by the dust on which thou treadest, and, like the weathercock, changing every hour thy course and compass, thou triumphest in the fancy that thou hast already grasped that goal with half thy hand. Yes; as children grasp at the moon. And would that you were but children in your teens! Who would then grudge you your sport? But you are forward boys, ambitious of playing the part of master before the time—knights of the peacock-feather—mock monarchs in

[1] Prov. viii. 17; xxiii. 26. [2] Eph. v. 31, 32. [3] 1 John, iii. 2.

the realm of thought. Is not your knowledge a journey without an end? Scarcely have you reached a stage when you must arise and proceed. Is it not like the thread of Ariadne, with which, painfully picking your steps, you creep on from darkness to light? The name for it is a working day. It will be Sabbath where we see face to face. There only, where all is comprehended in one, do we find rest. And if it be true that,

> Before the image of the mountains green
> Can mirrored on the crystal lake be seen,
> The angry storm must hush itself to rest,
> And not a ripple curl the water's breast ;

oh, how far are you yet from seeing a correct image even in the glass! For when will all be calm within you?

D.—The wise man says, "A right answer is like a sweet kiss."[1] I shall still with half-broken mast be tossed about upon the spacious sea, but now I know in what direction to look for *land.*

14.

Faith is a new Sense.

Faith's a sixth sense, by all confessed
To reach much further than the rest.

Heb. xi. 24-27. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible."

[1] Prov. xxiv. 26—Luther's vers.

MOSES had become a king's son, and the future offered to him the prospect of honour, wealth, and luxury, but he chose to avouch his connection with the poor and servile Hebrew nation. It may well have been that he did not at the time foresee the forty long years of contention and trouble which awaited him; for during these he was "a sorely afflicted man, above all men upon the earth,"[1] and had little enjoyment. Even his natural understanding, however, was sufficient to show him that he would have to encounter reproach and bitter variance and sore privations; and yet from all of these he did not recoil. Like Christ, who instead of the joy which was set before Him, preferred to endure the cross,[2] so did Moses esteem such reproach greater riches than the treasures in Egypt. And this is the reason why it is called the reproach of *Christ.* The recompense of the reward was invisible to the bodily eye; but, notwithstanding, he beheld it with the eye of faith; and with faith's view of it, it behoved him to rest content until the 120th year of his life. Only then did he attain to *vision;* but even then not to *fruition.* For though he saw it with his eyes, he was not allowed to touch with his foot the land of Canaan, the goal of his earthly pilgrimage. From the top of Nebo he beheld it afar off, but "went not over thither,"[3] passing meanwhile into that better land of which Canaan presented but an imperfect image.[4] The hoary pilgrim was thus a true type of the walk of faith in this scene of sojourn on earth.

"He endured as seeing Him that is invisible." Yes, such is faith; and no words could describe it better. It is the eye for the world unseen; it is a conviction wrought into the inner man which makes us surer of its objects than the sense of sight does of those which stand before our eyes. We are told in Scripture[5] that it "is the *substance* of things hoped for, the *evidence* of things not seen;" and this means that it is a testimony of God's Spirit in our mind, excelling every other, nay,

[1] Num. xii. 3—Luther's vers. [2] Heb. xii. 2—Luther's vers.
[3] Deut. xxxiv. 4. [4] Heb. iv. 8, 9. [5] Heb. xi. 1.

bidding defiance to all other testimonies of the visible world. For thus it is written respecting Abraham: "Against hope he believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God."[1] How forcible the expression, "Against hope he believed in hope"! What was there in all the visible world on which the patriarch could build the belief or expectation that his seed should one day be equal in number to the stars of heaven? In nature he saw only a pure negation. But what does it matter although all creation say No, when the word of God has said Yes? Faith fastens on Him who is unseen, as if it saw Him.

How marvellous a thing faith is! There is no power greater than that which the sight of our eyes exercises over us, and yet in defiance of it faith can hope even where there is nothing to hope for. In truth, however, faith itself is likewise an eye, and one before which all the riches of the invisible world—the deepest recesses of heaven, as well as the abyss of hell—lie disclosed. Were it otherwise, how could a man possibly prevail upon himself to put to hazard the present world, with all its wealth, in order to win eternity? "Were the universal globe," says a believer, "and all that it contains, suspended upon the thread of a lie, and did I know the word of truth which would break the thread, that word I would utter, although the globe and all that it contains were to drop into the abyss." Whence comes this certainty and confidence? It cannot have its source in the sublunary world, and must be a testimony vouchsafed by God to the soul. Let there be but a grain of such inward faith, and it will remove mountains of appetites and lusts, and extirpate the passions most deeply rooted in the heart. Yes, a single grain of such faith makes the entire

[1] Rom. iv. 18-20.

domain of visible things transparent to us. We see through them all, and taste through them all, the powers of the invisible world *to come.* That "*in Him we live, and move, and have our being,*" becomes a reality to the believer; and the words of the Lord, "I am a God at hand, and not afar off," a matter of experience. He scents the breath of the Divine Being whether he walks forth into the garden of nature, or mixes in the society of men, or remains in the solitude of his closet. We need not wonder that the generality look upon the believer as a fool and a dreamer who lives in a world of his own, instead of that which is common to the race. And yet the reverse is the case. *They* are the dreamers. It is they who live in a world of their own; for so long as the breath of God is not everywhere traced and felt here below, what is the world but the vain and unsubstantial fabric of a dream? No, it is *we* who are awake; we who now in time already experience eternity, and in the present world taste the powers of that which is to come.

Is it so that I am without strength? Oh, now I perceive that the impotence of man is but impotence of faith! Faith removes mountains. What are all the earthly things that can come against me — enmity, sickness, poverty, and death? They are only what I myself make them, by my faith or my unbelief. Faith subjugates and transforms without distinction all outward objects. If at every moment of my life I could cleave to Him that is invisible, as if I actually saw Him with my eyes, what would then be difficult, what impossible for me?

If, indeed, He were revealed to my view only in the character of *Judge*, my strength would be broken rather than increased. But it is as the *Father of my Lord Jesus Christ*, and with outstretched arms to embrace His prodigal son, that He stands before me. Am I not a citizen of the New Jerusalem —that Jerusalem of which it is written, "The inhabitants shall not say I am sick; the people that dwell therein *shall be forgiven their iniquity*"?[1] Yes; now I know why so much stress,

[1] Isa. xxxiii. 24.

is laid upon faith, and why it is written, "O Lord, are not Thine eyes set upon faith?"[1] Abraham, by believing, *gave glory* to God. We glorify Thee when we believe that what Thou dost promise Thou art also able to perform; and our faith is our only worship.

Tell me, my soul, why to and fro,
Wanders o'er all the earth thine eye?
What sees it there but sin and woe,
Bewailed with tears that never dry?
Or why to ocean's furthest shore
For peace and comfort dost thou roam?
Eternity is at thy door,
And all its joys thou hast at home.

Yes, these to have and hold are thine,
When to thy fixed and earnest gaze
In the heart's lone and silent shrine,
Its wealth and glory heaven displays.
Can aught be sure if these deceive,
And balk like airy dreams the hand?
Though baffled sense may not believe,
Firm and substantial there they stand.

What though in vain thou search around
For some poor staff on which to lean,
Nor one of all the ties be found
That knit thee to this earthly scene?
Oh, let them unregretted go,
With all that here thy heart could charm.
Be not dismayed—to help thee, lo!
God offers an almighty arm.

The staves on which thy hopes once leant,
By Him were broken one by one;
His hand the bonds asunder rent
Which round thy heart the world had thrown.
And this He did that thou mightst yield
To none but Him thy confidence,
And on the things eternal build
As if they stood revealed to sense.

Oh then, my soul, if earth to thee
Shut her inhospitable door,
Bid her a long good-night, and be
Undaunted as thou wert before.

[1] Jer. v. 3—Luther's vers.

Not till the senses all deny
One grain of comfort or delight,
Does faith's bedimmed and timid eye
Begin to see heaven's portal bright.

15.

The Heavens declare the Glory of God.

There are Three Testaments which show
What God both is and does;
And he who well the FIRST *would know*
The SECOND *must peruse;*
Nor will he in the Second speed,
Unless the THIRD *be rightly read.*

PSALM xix.—A Psalm of David. *Part First.—Verse* 1. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork."

MAN so often calls for *preachers*—ought he not much rather to desire a proper *ear* for hearing them? for, in truth, we are surrounded with preachers wherever we turn our eyes. There are preachers in the firmament above, preachers in the earth below, preachers within us and preachers without. What a sermon it is which the firmament of heaven alone preaches to us—the sky, whether azure and serene, or overcast with stormy clouds! The heaven, with its marvels, declares the glory of God by the magnificence of day as well as by the magnificence of night.

But do many listen? Can it be denied that until God speak to his heart within, man cannot comprehend the language He utters from everything about and above and beneath him? How beautiful to this effect the words of Tauler! "He who gazes long at the sun sees a sun impressed on every object to which he afterwards turns his eye; and it is the same with him

who is much occupied with the contemplation of God." There are hours when we can stand in the bosom of nature and feel as if we were in a church, and a fresh doxology were gushing from every breast, so that we cannot choose but join the hymn, and are caught and borne along by the general flood of devotion. At other times, again, how dumb and speechless the creatures around us seem all to be, as if every one of them must needs pursue its way alone without the guidance of a heavenly hand! The difference depends upon whether God speaks *within us* or not.

> Open thy heart to God; if He be there,
> The outspread world will be thy book of prayer.

Verse 2. "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge."

It is still the same heaven as that to which the Saviour lifted up his eyes when He prayed—the same as that on which the childless Abraham gazed when in the silence of night he received the promise, "Look now towards heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: . . . so shall thy seed be." It is the same heaven as that which our first parents beheld, when as yet holy and sinless children they sojourned in Paradise. Here below, on the surface of the earth, all has changed—at least among the children of men; but for 6000 years day has been uttering unto day, and night unto night, the same high and perpetual discourse concerning Him by whom the heavens and the earth were made. There is something peculiarly grand and elevating in the thought that through so long a series of ages nature has continued the same, and yet that to this day she retains all the charm of novelty, because nothing in her merely *is*, but all *tending to be*. Who can refuse to exclaim with the poet—

> O nature! what in thy fair face we see
> Not *sameness* is, but *similarity;*
> For all is *old* and all grows *new* again
> In thy perpetual domain.

Let a man once become sensible of the contrast between nature's order and regularity, and the never-ceasing inconstancy and fickleness of his own heart, and oh! how does he then yearn for that inward steadfastness over which the vicissitude of light and shadow—of day and night—has lost all power! It is this which gives to nature the edifying and medicinal influence which it exercises over us.

Verse 3. "There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard."

How true! Nature's is a voice that can be heard and understood in every speech and language. It addresses a man like the look of a friend or the pressure of an affectionate hand, which are intelligible to every nation of the earth without the aid of words. In fact, is it not the very eye of God—of Him who is the very best of friends—that does look out upon us from nature? And in some measure at least the nations of the earth have not failed to catch the accents of this voice. It is true they could not have comprehended its meaning, and must have wanted the interpreter in the heart, for they worshipped the creature instead of the Creator.[1] Evidently they must have supposed that the hymn which all created things in heaven and upon earth are singing was a hymn in the *creature's* praise, and yet what all created things declare is the *glory of the God* who made them. How many also there are among ourselves by whom this is not rightly understood! Often when I hear their outbursts of enthusiasm at the beauty of nature, it pains me to observe that it is always the mere glory of the creature which they extol, and that their minds do not ascend to Him whose handiwork the creature is. Fain would I accost them in the height of their admiration, and say, O my friends! you quite mistake the meaning of the hymn. It celebrates the *glory of that God* who gave all their beauty to His works.

[1] Rom. i. 21-23.

Sweet lily of the field, arrayed
In all thy pomp of dress,
To be my pattern thou wert made,
And gentle monitress.

"O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God; and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand."[1]

Verses 4-6. "Their line[2] is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them[3] hath He set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof."

Every object in the firmament of heaven declares the glory of God. Every object produces upon us the impression that all is old and all new in that perpetual domain. This impression, however, we receive chiefly from the *sun*, when we see it every morning ascend the horizon in youthful freshness, as if emerging from a bath. To one of us it might well appear that in the opposite hemisphere it had been recruiting its strength, as we, the children of men, have meanwhile ourselves been doing during the silence of night; and yet its setting *here* has only been its rising *there*. How it bedims with its splendour whatever else presumes to shine beside it, and so in perfect solitude ascends the heavens! How monarch-like, and, as it were, without respect of persons, it sheds its beams upon mountain and valley, upon the humble and the great! We can scarcely wonder that they to whom the *second* of God's Testaments was not vouchsafed to help them to expound the *first*, which is the Book of Nature, should have prostrated themselves and adored it as the Lord. And yet what is it but the ministering servant of Him who claims it as His *own*, and of whom we read that "He maketh *His* sun to rise on the evil

[1] Psalm xcv. 6, 7.
[2] According to others, *sound*.
[3] *I.e.*, in the ends of the world or the heavens.

and the good"? Nay, it is but the servant of His servants, for it only ministers to other suns which all at last circle around Him who bears the name of the "Father of Lights."[1] Doubtless there was truth in the apostle's words when he said that "the invisible things of God, even His eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen from the creation of the world;" so that the Gentiles "are without excuse."[2] In fact, however, these things are clearly seen only by those in whose heart His precious Word—the Holy Bible—has kindled the light which illumines all nature besides. When it is said that the three revelations of God—that in Nature, that in the Old Testament, and that in the New—constitute together a single book in three parts, it is a book which can be properly understood only when in reading it we reverse the order. If, however, the two latter parts have been duly mastered, and we then again open the first, oh what sermons never before imagined resound from it in our ears! None but a disciple of Christ understands the meaning of the words when, encompassed by the glories of nature, He exclaims: "Put off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place where thou standest is holy ground." Yes; only the Christian, when he calls the earth holy ground, knows that it is because the Holy One of God once trod it with sinless foot—because on it He offered the sacrifice of His precious blood—and because upon it, when it shall have been consecrated afresh, "the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God."[3] This is to look into the heart of His grace: and to him, but only to him, who thus looks, does the world become full of mere miracles of mercy. Oh, with what new eyes do we read the book of nature when we see on every page of it the traces of One who so loved the world that He did not spare His only-begotten Son, but tore Him from His heart, and delivered Him up, that the world might be saved!

When with an eye like this a man gazes into nature, it is very true that his heart will, even less than that of others, be

[1] James, i. 17. [2] Rom. i. 20. [3] Rev. xxi. 3.

satiated with her loveliness; but then it will be filled with *boddings* of the *imperishable* beauty of that *new* earth upon which God's children shall dwell from eternity to eternity, when they have attained to the glorious freedom which has been promised to them. Then does the enraptured heart send forth exulting shouts, and sing—

Lord, if Thy throne and footstool shine
So brightly here below,
Who shall the glories all divine
Within Thy heart that glow?

And again—

Fair art thou, earth, clad in so bright array;
And when thy dazzling beauty I survey,
Enraptured, I exclaim—Yes, thou art fair!

So fair thou art even now when on thy plains
Walk sinful men, whose touch thy soil profanes,
And proudly vaunt themselves thy sovereign lords.

But, earth, what wilt thou be when o'er thy fields
The hand of ransomed saints the sceptre wields?
For that blest day thou keep'st thy bridal robes.

My Father in heaven, I know and have felt that every object in Thy glorious kingdom may become to us a preacher, and that the fault lies in our obdurate ears that nature, alike in her loveliness and terror, preaches to us so little. All created things discourse of Thy glory. Day utters it unto day, and night unto night. Oh give me a truly childlike heart, that I may comprehend what they say! Vouchsafe to me also an unruffled mind, that in the voice of the whole creation I may hear that of the uncreated God, who is my Father and my Lord. I will exercise my thoughts upon Thy holy word of revelation, that so I may become more intelligent of what it may be Thy will to say to me from the book of nature. And above and beyond all the loveliness of nature now displayed to my view, vouchsafe to me a blissful presentiment of that happy day when the earth, the present cradle of fallen humanity, shall, along with her Lord, be exalted to the *imperishable glory* which thou hast destined for them.

16.

The Law of the Lord converteth the Soul.

Blest are the righteous, but he well must know
That which right is, who what is right would do.

Psalm xix. *Part Second.—Verse* 7. "The law of the Lord is without change,[1] converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple."

LIKE the word of God in nature, so likewise is His word in revelation without change; and that is the reason why it recruits[1] my soul. I need a divine word which continues always the same, and which is sure. Man is required to build his whole life upon religion; what would become of him if religion itself rested on no solid and immovable foundation? Oh, could I but build all my actions upon the Lord's unchangeable law and sure testimony, how unchangeable and sure my whole life itself would then become! And yet what is this but true wisdom? I have always figured to myself the wise man as one who never needs to change his principles, but remains constantly like himself. To such a condition, however, we can only attain by founding our life on a sure testimony of God; for, as King Solomon says, "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord alone maketh the heart sure." [2]

Verses 8, 9. "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether."

How delightful to me it is that the Lord's commandments

[1] Luther's vers. [2] Prov. xvi. 2—Luther's vers.

are all *pure* and *clean*, and *true* and *righteous!* Well do I know that the knowledge of God and the knowledge of man are the two hinges on which the door of heaven turns. But not less conscious am I, from my natural inclinations, that the thoughts which I entertain respecting myself, the world, and God, are far from being right; and hence the continual desire I have to compare them with the thoughts of a being who is higher than myself. It seems to me that we can offer to God no more simple and natural prayer than this;—

> Oh search my inmost thoughts, that they
> May never from Thy precepts stray;
> Guide heart and mind
> The truth to find.

Every day do I experience that a right point of view, even when I have succeeded in finding it, is so apt to be again lost; and I see more truth than I can express in the saying of the apostle James, that when we contemplate our inner man, it happens to us, as it does to him who looks at his bodily face in a glass: "He beholdeth himself," are the words, "and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was."[1] Take a single instance: I clearly see how greatly we need to call in our scattered senses, and to concentrate the whole force of our minds upon the great task of life, in order to discharge it aright. And more or less this is a conviction which many share. We act, however, like men who, although knowing that they have a tower to build, do yet in their daily avocations make no greater preparation for it than if it were some paltry hut. How needful, then, it is to resort frequently to the divine Word, if for nothing else than to keep alive in our minds the consciousness of what the chief task of life is! How great a boon it is to possess commandments of God that are altogether clean and pure, and true and right! For even though it be said that God is nothing but an unuttered sigh in every human heart, who is able to utter it until the word of revelation has taught him the proper language?

[1] James, i. 23, 24.

Verse 10. "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb."

To utter with perfect sincerity these words of the Psalmist is far from an easy task. Well do we *know* that we *ought* to be able to do it. But are we able? It pertains to the delusion by which we are all ensnared, that we fancy ourselves to *be* as much better as we have learned to *know* better what it is to be so. Still I have reason to praise the Lord. At one period of my life, no doubt, there were many things which, in the inmost recesses of my heart, I felt to be dearer to me and sweeter to my taste than the word and the commandment of my God, and when I could not have understood at all what the Psalmist here says. But it is otherwise with me now, in so far as that I can now declare that I understand what he avers—nay, more, that I *feel* it. Moreover, I can see what my Saviour means when He affirms, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me." I experience a blessedness in thinking that God has revealed His will in a *sure* word; and even when, in any particular instance, it seems bitter to reduce it to practice, still even in this bitterness there is a mixture of what is sweet; and by the grace of God I hope to advance ever further and further in the same way. Oh how abundant a source of felicity that will be!

Verses 11, 12. "Moreover by them is Thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults."

Great, no doubt, is the reward of keeping the commandments even here below. It always seems to me to be in itself a great reward that God counts us worthy of being taken into His service. I feel it to be a high honour when I think that I am the *servant* of such a Master. Nay, rather are we His *children*

when we are able heartily and willingly to do His will, and that is a still more blessed reward; for they who are children are likewise heirs, yea, joint-heirs with Christ, the true and the only-begotten Son.[1]

The *warning* given to us by the commandments of my God, I will endeavour to improve as often as I find myself again in danger of falling into ways of my own. I know that in a thousand things I am yet unacquainted with myself, and this therefore shall be my daily prayer :—

Eye, that on guile and falsehood cannot look,
Blessed are they no *secret* sins who brook,
But, free from sly
Hypocrisy,
To God and man do what is right,
And humbly walk before Thy sight.

Verse 13. "Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression."

Do I still commit *presumptuous*, or, in other words, deliberate sins? Would to God that I did not! for he who willingly offends against any one commandment, is upon the way to commit the sin against the Holy Ghost. It is true that this is often done by us without our being conscious of it. We practise some self-deception in order to hang a veil over the divine commandment, and in this manner are gradually enticed into acts which previously, with a clear and unclouded eye, we looked upon as evil. And here again it is important that we should frequently hold up before our eyes the mirror of God's Word, and submit to its reproofs. It may likewise have a wholesome effect to cherish, as the pious Psalmist does, a continual mistrust of ourselves, lest by ceasing to walk circumspectly we may perchance become guilty even of the "great transgression." When I question my heart whether it would

[1] Rom. viii. 17.

be possible for me wholly to break with Him whom at present my soul loves as its dearest portion, I am constrained to say that in *myself* I have no certainty and confidence that I shall always abide with Him. Such certainty I find only in Himself.

Verse 14. "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer.

Yes, O my God, let them be acceptable unto Thee! After almost every quiet prayer and holy meditation in the divine presence, we have the consciousness that there was an ear which heard us, and a heart which received our sighs. The effect of a silent colloquy with God is so soothing! There was a time when I used greatly to wonder at these words of Luther :—

> Bear and forbear and *silent* be,
> Tell to no man thy misery;
> Yield not in trouble to dismay—
> God can deliver any day.

I wondered, because we feel the outpouring of grief into the heart of a friend to be so sweet. At the same time, he who talks much of his troubles to *men* is apt to fall into a way of saying too little of them to *God;* while, on the other hand, he who has often experienced the blessed alleviation which flows from silent converse with the Eternal, loses much of his desire for the sympathy of his fellows. It appears to me now as if spreading out our distress *too largely* before men, served only to make it broader, and to take away its *zest;* and hence the proverb, "Talking of trouble makes it double." On the contrary, if, when in distress, we can contrive to maintain calm composure of mind, and to bear it always as in the sight of God, submissively waiting for succour from Him according to the words of the Psalmist, "Truly my soul waiteth upon God; from Him cometh my salvation,"[1]—in that case, the distress

[1] Psalm lxii. 1.

neither extends in breadth nor sinks in depth. It lies upon the surface of the heart like the morning mist, which the sun as it ascends dissipates into light clouds.

O thou Searcher of hearts! let the sure testimony of Thy Word make my heart sure, and the purity of Thy commandments purify and enlighten my eyes. Thou knowest me better than I know myself. Let Thy light shine even unto the most hidden folds of my soul. How different the light in which I now appear from that in which I saw myself a year ago! and yet I am conscious of still wearing a mask which conceals me from myself, and of often trying to think that I am what I am not. I see the temptation, and yet cannot make my escape from it. I perceive the hook of Satan, and yet snatch at the bait. If my rescue from these snares of self-deception depended upon efforts of my own, I would give them up in despair, for the more I struggle the more I become entangled. To Thee, then, O Lord, to Thee I turn, that Thy pure and holy Spirit may disclose to me my secret faults. Grant that Thy divine Word may serve as a bright mirror in which I behold my image in its perfect truth. Lo, I feel that I have fortitude enough to condemn myself, if Thy Word require it at my hands. It is for truth, and truth alone, that my soul is athirst. Even although death be in it, oh, rather give me death with truth than life with falsehood! It is because I find *perfect* truth in Thy law that Thy law is so sweet to me. That is the reason for which I love it even when it wrings every subterfuge from my hands, and tears asunder the veils behind which I would have concealed myself from Thy face. I am *willing* to be condemned by Thee, because I know that none gain admission into heaven but they who confess that their desert was hell.

And shall I never, then, O Lord my God, advance so far as to live so much as a single day without sin in Thy sight? Oh, if I cannot be exempt from such sins as spring from infirmity of the flesh, or indiscretion, or sloth, keep me at least from falling into presumptuous sins! Above all that, however,

above and beyond my transgressions, both little and great, above my self-reproaches and self-exculpations, lies the confidence towards Thee which through Christ Jesus I am privileged to entertain. Forbid that the *corrections* of Thy Word should ever make me forget its *consolations;* for although it behoves us to condemn ourselves, we must do it only in order *to be justified by Thee.* Alas for man! how apt he is to overlook the one of these things in the other! and yet they are both alike indispensable for his salvation. O Lord, guide me by Thy Spirit, that on the narrow way I may turn aside neither to the right hand nor to the left.

17.

Meditate in His Law day and night.

I am a dry and withered stock!
I hear thee still complain;
But plant thee by the water-brook,
And thou'lt grow green again.

Psalm i. 1, 2. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night."

FULL well did godly men, even under the Old Testament, discern how precious a gift the grace of God has provided for us in His Word; and gladly did they forsake all other company in order to commune with Him there. How poor a novice, then, must I be, who still pant so eagerly for the companionship of men, though I have the offer of companionship so delightful with the good of all ages, and with Him who

is my God and my Lord! Of what sort are the companies into which I go? Do I always return from them more composed, more devout, or in any way a better man? And if not, does the fault lie wholly with the persons whom I meet? No; I am persuaded that if all were right with myself—if on these occasions I were to bear in remembrance all that has been done for me—even the counsel of the ungodly might then prove to me a counsel for good. But, alas! how often do I barter my birthright for a mess of pottage; lay myself, like Samson, in Delilah's lap,—and when the cry is heard, "The Philistines be upon thee!" and Samson awakes, behold, his strength is departed from him!

The pious Psalmist possessed only the Old Testament, and yet felt himself rich and happy in possessing it, although to its disciples the Old Testament was a schoolmaster stern and severe. I possess the benign and precious Gospel, and yet I am far from valuing it as I ought. It was a saying of Luther that "Holy Scripture is a sweet-scented herb, and that the more you rub it, the more it emits its fragrance." Alas! never, certainly, have I rubbed it enough; I still cleave so much to the ingenious thoughts of men and the deep things of the learned. And yet the Bible alone is a deep ocean; whereas learned men, even when their cogitations are shrewdest, are mere water-cisterns, which in seasons of need sometimes run dry and sometimes congeal. In approaching the Word of God, I must empty myself of my own thoughts and imaginations far more than I have ever done; for when our hands are full we can receive no more. I take too little pains with the Word, forgetting that he who desires to drink new wine must not decline the labour of treading the press. The Psalmist says that "in God's law he doth meditate;" and ought we not to go earnestly to work with His Word, seeing that it is written, "O Lord, *how great are Thy words! and Thy thoughts are very deep. A brutish man knoweth not, neither doth a fool understand this*"?[1] Ye proud masters who treat the blessed Word of God

1 Psalm xcii. 5, 6—Luther's vers.

as if it were a mere alphabet-book for children, and for no better reason than because you are yourselves mere A-B-C-Darians in divine things, how will the saying of the Psalmist one day rise up and bear testimony against you? As yet, like the water-spider, you have but glided fleetly over the surface of this ocean. Oh that you would attempt even for once to dive into its depths!

We are surprised that so little of the faith of our fathers is to be found amongst us. But what else save little of their *faith* can there be, seeing that there is amongst us so little of their habit of *prayer and meditation* upon God's Word and law? Need we wonder that the children can no more wage wars like those of which they hear their fathers discourse, when they refuse to practise the martial exercises in which their fathers were trained? We complain of being so overburdened with work that we have no leisure for prayer and meditation on the Word; and yet we read of a man who had a task upon his shoulders that would have been too heavy for ten of us, but of whom one of his familiar friends has borne testimony that he did not allow a single day to pass without devoting to prayer at least three of the hours most convenient for the purpose.[1]

Verse 3. "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

How good a thing it must be when a man resembles the tree here described, which always, as the season when it is due arrives, brings forth its fruit, and whose leaves do not wither! To make this, however, possible, the tree must be planted by the rivers of water, in order that there may be a continual supply of fresh moisture to the root. How apt, then, the figure, when the pious Psalmist here compares the Holy Scriptures to such a water-brook! Oh what a flood of power and life

[1] Veit Dietrich in the 8th Sermon of Mathesius.

streams in upon a man when the Word of God, as the apostle expresses it, is *mixed* with faith in his heart! He thereby acquires a sort of *invincibility*, so that with the Bible in his hand he can put to flight his weakness, his sloth, gloomy thoughts, temptations of the flesh, and all his spiritual enemies, be they however strong or subtle, and called by whatsoever name. Just as our Lord and Master showed in His own temptation, when, with no other sword and buckler but the Word, He discomfited Satan. How happy the man would be who, amidst life's troubles and conflicts, could adopt the language of good Dr Luther and say, "The Lord not only acts as the shepherd of the Christian flock, but likewise gives His rod and staff, which means His *Word*, that it may be to them a *sword!* And this weapon they carry not in their hand, but in their mouth, and with it do not only comfort them that mourn, but likewise put the devil, with all his emissaries, be they ever so subtle and keen, to rout. In this way, by the grace of God, I have kept my feet for these eighteen years past, and have allowed my enemies continually to rage and threaten, slander, condemn, devise wicked plots and machinations, and practise all kinds of villany against me. I have allowed them anxiously to perplex their minds with schemes to take away my life and uproot my doctrine, or, as I ought rather to say, God's; and yet all the while I was happy and in good spirits, though better, no doubt, at one time than another, and gave little heed to their bluster and rage, but kept hold of the rod of comfort and sat at the Lord's table—by which I mean that I committed to Him the cause in which, without desire or intention of mine, He had enlisted me—and meanwhile repeated to Him a paternoster or a psalm."

Here, my dear readers, you have a specimen of the peculiar power derived from the fresh water-brooks when a man plants himself beside them, and has his root nourished by the Word of God. And wherever such power reigns in the heart, there, without fail, does a man also bring forth fruit in *his* season; which means, that whatever it be which duty calls upon him

at any time to do, he then finds himself competent for the task, because he continues always *fresh*. Christian faith gives brightness to the eyes and colour to the cheeks; whereas he who lives without the Word of God is one whose calendar, every day and hour, shows a change of weather, and whose whole life is one long April month, when sunshine and snow-drift, fresh growth and sear decay, perpetually succeed each other. This, however, is a secret which must not be divulged to the world, and therefore he must needs have recourse to paint, that he may present a decent appearance when he goes into company; and thus, at last, he learns to tell lies to himself. I have read of a celebrated man[1] that, when about to expire, he cried out in sore distress, "*Give me great thoughts.*" Now no one doubts that great thoughts are like sea-waves which bear proud vessels aloft, or like the cool shade of the fig-tree in a sultry day, or like noble elms on which the vine can fasten for support. Great thoughts train a man to greatness; but what are all the great thoughts in the world compared with God's eternal thoughts of peace disclosed to us in the Gospel? When it is with these that the Christian moistens the roots of his existence—when these are what he makes his prop and stay, and on which he climbs aloft—when these are what he keeps perpetually before the eyes of his soul—he cannot fail to acquire an inward steadfastness. Such an one can never wither; and, moreover, *whatsoever he doeth must prosper*. Why do other people not prosper in their doings? The reason is, because they have no one to *control their thoughts:* in other words, in place of being governed by the eternal thoughts of God, they have many masters, and many of these are unwise, and suggest to them some new folly every hour. Will you never learn how pitiable a creature he is who allows himself to be driven and tossed about by every momentary freak, every gust of humour and desire, as the wave is seized and tossed by the whirlwind? This is what the Psalmist expresses with still greater force in the following words:—

[1] Herder.

Verse 4. "The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away."

How singularly true! *Ungodly* or God-*less* is equivalent in meaning to root-*less*, which implies that they are the sport of all the winds of caprice and accident. When I observe the persons who do not make the divine Word the rule of their life, I see in by far the most of them the mere reflection of the circumstances by which they are surrounded, and of the events in which they are involved. They do not themselves know what they shall be next year, or even to-morrow. As for others, to whom this description may not apply, it may be that they really have a compass to direct their course; but it is that of the world, and is contained in the following proverb:—

> *I*, *me*, and *mine*, those mighty powers,
> Rule, at their will, this world of ours.

The vast majority, however, do not follow even that compass, but are like the chaff which the least breath of wind disperses on every side. "I hate vain thoughts; but Thy law do I love,"[1] says the Psalmist in another passage, but to the same effect—viz., that the man in whom the *law of the Lord* does not wield the sceptre, is like a ship without a pilot, or a pilot without a compass, or a compass without a needle. An Eastern poet has said—

> Man's heart is like the apple
> Which to and fro is driven,
> On some deserted heath,
> By the four winds of heaven.
> Man's heart is like the water
> That seethes in a pot,
> And sinks and bubbles up
> As the fire grows cold or hot.

It thus appears that that which the human heart lacks, and which it has most need to obtain, has been recognised by man from where the sun rises to where it sets. The only thing they did *not* know was *where to find it.*

[1] Psalm cxix. 113.

Verses 5, 6. "Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish."

If we compare the way of the ungodly with that of the children of God in their journey through the world, it certainly does appear as if the former were never at a loss for a path on which to go; just as the Lord on a certain occasion said to His yet unbelieving brethren, "Your time is alway ready."[1] The way of the righteous, however, which is the way of divine prescription, is rough, uphill, and narrow, and often without any visible outlet. Nevertheless, while he is looking anxiously around, and his heart faints and fears, the eye of God has long seen where it is to terminate, and to terminate in triumph; whereas the broad way of the ungodly perishes.

From depths to many a wondrous height,
From straits to places wide,
To show the wonders of His might,
The Lord His folk doth guide.

Forward, then, thou faint and trembling heart—still forward upon the path of duty—the path prescribed by God! Thou canst not see the issue, but His eye has seen it long ago. His world has been so arranged, that upon the path of duty, and upon that path alone, can the blissful goal be reached. A pious Israelite of the olden time has said that "the world is founded upon the law of Moses," which means nothing else than that the path of duty and integrity cannot *ultimately* conduct to any but the happiest end.

O consolatory thought that "*the Lord knoweth my way!*" I will therefore no longer stop or linger for a moment, even though to my own timid eye the path of duty may seem to be leading me into the yawning abyss. *The Lord knoweth my way*, and everything in the world; yea, the whole creation must become ministering angels to those who follow the direction of

[1] John, vii. 6.

His law. He who gave the commandments is the self-same God who guides with His hand all the powers of earth and heaven.

"*The way of the ungodly shall perish.*" For a little it may still continue, but perish it one day shall, and that in terror. It sometimes appears as if the Lord had forgotten His sacred office of judge, although, certainly, He will let nothing escape Him at the last. But not seldom, on the other hand, it appears as if even here in time, while he is confidently walking upon the broad way, the ungodly man felt a presentiment that that way is, ere long, suddenly to perish. For do we not occasionally observe in the lives of persons who are utterly forgetful of God, and already hardened in their minds, an inward hesitation and uncertainty, so that they all at once stand still like one awaking out of sleep, into which he immediately sinks back? And are not these, as it were, moments in which some single solemn toll of the bell that is to ring in the general judgment is wafted to their ear? "The way of the Lord is strength to the upright, but the workers of iniquity are of faint heart."[1]

Cherish, my soul, the elevating thought
That on the *Word* is built the world of God;
And that though nature's frame asunder break,
On duty's path I'm safe amid the wreck.
Be not dismayed though in the conflict dire
Truth's cause may seem—it seems but—to expire.
The ark of God unharmed survives the fray,
And all earth's crowns the crown of Christ obey.

[1] Prov. x. 29—Luther's vers.

18.

I am not come to destroy the Law and the Prophets.

Thou say'st I have the picture bright,
And care not on the sketch to look.
Yet even the sketch is worth a sight;
It shows the pains the painter took.

MATT. v. 17. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."

ROM. xv. 4. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."

SUCH is the divine seal which the mouth of truth has impressed upon the Old Testament, in order that we may never treat with indifference or contempt those writings which the Saviour read as the book of His heavenly Father. In general it was not to *destroy* that He—the epitome of all truth—appeared on earth. He came to fill up any outline of truth already existing, and to make of it a picture replete with life and power. As the stars do not really lose their light at the rising of the sun, but only lose it to our eyes, so is it with all the sparks of truth which were scattered abroad in the world when the sun of Christ arose; they still possess a glory—but then, as the apostle says, their glory is not to be considered a glory when compared with that which excelleth.[1] Oh that I had eyes to see the divine light which already shone in Moses and the prophets! God of the fathers, teach me devoutly to read that book which was devoutly read by my Saviour. O Thou God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicing

[1] 2 Cor. iii. 10.

of my heart. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."[1] "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law."[2]

How marvellous a temple of God is Scripture from its first commencement to its final close! It is coextensive with the history of the world, and accompanies, as it were, the human race from their origin to their end. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," are its opening words; and it terminates with a description of the period when New Jerusalem, the holy city, shall come down from God out of heaven, and the Lord God shall give light to His people, and they shall reign for ever and ever.[3] That is one broad characteristic which even an eye penetrating no deeper than the surface can scarcely fail to observe in the Book of God. I read in an author, to whom even the children of the world bend those knees which they refuse to bend to Christ, as follows: "The high veneration which has been paid to the Bible by so many of the nations and kindreds of the earth, is due to its intrinsic worth. It is not merely a kind of national book, but it is the book of the nations; exhibiting, as it does, the fortunes of one of these as the symbol of all the rest, connecting its history with the origin of the world, and through a gradual succession of temporal and spiritual evolutions and of necessary and casual events, carrying it forward to the remotest ages of eternity."[4]

How closely are the Old and New Testaments connected with each other, so that it is impossible to tear them asunder! "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord," is the promise with which the Old Testament concludes;[5] and with the account of how this same Elijah came and preached repentance the New Testament begins.[6] As the light shines dimly at the dawn, and then the morning star appears, and then at last comes the perfect day, so likewise is it with that long series of divine

[1] Rom. xv. 4. [2] Ps. cxix. 18. [3] Rev. xxi. 2; xxii. 5.
[4] Goethe. [5] Mal. iv. 5. [6] Matt. iii. 2; xi. 14; xvii. 11.

messengers of whom it is written,—"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son."[1]

The Lord has "fulfilled the law and the prophets." Even the Old Testament itself is a fulfilment. There are two voices in every human breast, the voice of *conscience* and the voice of *desire*, and both of these it has fulfilled, and given to them a clear utterance. Although in characters indistinct, a divine law[2] stands written in every breast of man. That law has now been written clearly and unmistakably upon stone and parchment, that we may no longer deny its existence to ourselves. It says, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might;* and likewise, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*[3] And is not this the sum and substance of all commandments which can possibly be delivered to man, as indeed our Lord showed when in these two He comprised the whole law?[4] But along with the voice which tells us what we ought to be, yet what we are not, there is also another which makes itself heard in every human heart, and which affords us a glimmer of hope that our trespasses shall not separate us for ever from our God, and that we shall at least one day become what we ought to be. This boding voice of desire, which, though feeble and confused, resounds through the successive generations of our race, has also met its fulfilment in the Old Testament. There, there are voices which clearly and unmistakably speak of the time when "*there shall be a fountain open to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness*"[5]—of a time when of the city of God upon earth it shall be said, "*Thy people shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.*"[6] But the law and prophecy of the Old Testament are themselves only shadows of the good things to come, of which the substance is Christ.[7] It was in

[1] Heb. i. 1. [2] Rom. ii. 15. [3] Deut. vi. 5; Lev. xix. 18.
[4] Mark, xii. 29-31. [5] Zech. xiii. 1. [6] Isa. lx. 21. [7] Heb. x. 1.

Him, our Saviour, that the fountain for sin and uncleanness was opened. It was from His mouth that the prophecy came, "Where I am"—and we may be allowed to subjoin, *such* as I am—"there" and such "also shall my servant be." And ever since we obtained this hope, even the law is no longer a shadow for us who are Christians. It has been quickened into life. For now we can address each other in the words of John and say, "Little children let us love Him, for He first loved us;" and wherever such a love as this is felt, there the law no longer stands inscribed upon the table of stone—there it is written by the Holy Ghost upon the hearts of men, as the voice of prophecy promised that it should one day be. Hear the words: "I will make a *new* covenant, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."[1]

The prophecies, however, are by no means the only part of the Old Testament in which the shadows of the good things to come have been enshrined. In point of fact, the people of God, with the whole of their religious rites, and even the events of their history, constitute an adumbration of future blessings and of future times. The utterances of the prophets appear merely as bright spots, in which the spirit which pervades the whole of that ancient economy concentrates its power and energies more clearly into view. "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation:" is not that a description of the "spiritual Israel" whom Christ in the New Testament has made a royal priesthood?[2] And as to their rites of worship, oh, when it is given to any of us to catch a glimpse of the awful mysteries which are hidden in them, how do we

[1] Jer. xxxi. 31-33. [2] Gal. vi. 16; 1 Pet. ii. 9; Rev. v. 10.

then exclaim with David, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple"![1]

In the Temple there was the *fore-court* of the tabernacle for the *people*, typifying those who outwardly belong to the holy nation, but who have not yet become priestly souls, qualified to offer acceptable sacrifices to God. There was next the *holy place*, into which the priests alone were admitted, prefiguring those who, like priests, make their lives a continual act of religious worship, and present to the Lord the spiritual oblations with which He is well pleased.[2] There was then the *holiest of all*, from which even the priests were debarred, and into which only the high priest was permitted to enter, and he only once a-year, prefiguring the Church made perfect —that Church which is hereafter to see what here on earth was the object of its faith; just as in the Apocalypse the eyes of the seer behold the temple of God opened in heaven—that true holy of holies—and in it the ark of His testament.[3] In the fore-court stood the laver, in which it behoved the priests to wash their hands and feet before they entered the holy place; also the altar of burnt-offering, on which were presented the sacrifices foreshadowing the great oblation of Christ. In the holy place was set the table with the twelve loaves of showbread—the offering made by Israel to the Lord, and typifying the good works with which He is well pleased. There, also, stood the golden candlestick with the seven lamps to give light to the apartment, from which all light from without was excluded, and typifying the divine Word, by whose light priestly souls are guided on their way. Finally, in the holy place there was likewise the altar of incense, whose fragrant smoke ascended to heaven, and was a figure of the prayers of the saints.[4] In the awful darkness of the most holy place stood the ark of the covenant, over which the presence of the Lord was en-

[1] Psalm xxvii. 4.
[2] 1 Peter ii. 5.
[3] Rev. xi. 19.
[4] Psalm cxli. 2; Rev. viii. 4.

throned and gave forth its oracles, and in it the sacred chest containing the law, upon which the covenant of the Lord with His people was founded—the chest being for that reason called the *ark of the covenant*, or of *the testimony of God*, to signify that the connection of the Lord with His people rests upon the eternal pillars of the law and its observance. Above it, made of pure and massive gold, was the lid of the mercy-seat overshadowed by the wings of the cherubim, whose fourfold face of a lion, an ox, an eagle, and a man—severally emblematical of the qualities of majesty, strength, freedom, and intelligence in the creatures—pictured forth the creation itself; while above them brooded the mysterious presence of the Lord of hosts—the whole forming a representation of the reign of the invisible Jehovah over all that He has made, and of which the foundations are grace and law. We have to mention, also, those manifold sacrifices ordained for all sorts of transgression—the thank-offerings—the praises—and the sin offerings—all intended to supplement what is lacking in our poor gratitude, praises, and affection, and to take away the guilt of sin. What are they, with their perpetual repetitions, but a weak adumbration of that perfect sacrifice which has been offered by the High Priest of the New Testament, who could say, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God!"[1] for that is the sacrifice which has given to these shadowy emblems their perfect truth.

Yes, it is a sacred allegory which speaks to me from all the institutions and narratives of the Old Testament, and by which I also ought to be drawn towards Him who has brought into the world the substance of the good things which were to come. How it teaches me to adore the preceptive grace of God, who was pleased in this manner to train and prepare mankind for the revelation of the mystery which in the silence of His bosom had been kept secret[2] since the world began! How I learn from it to hope that the God who so faithfully reared His child Israel until the time came for taking the bandage from his eyes, will also train me, feeding me with milk so long as I am

[1] Heb. x. 9. [2] Rom. xvi. 25.

still a babe and until I am fit for stronger meat, even that perfect word of righteousness![1] Go with me, Thou God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! Open mine eyes, and teach me to see wondrous things out of the law.

19.

O Lord, Thy Thoughts are very deep.

So vast the fabric, that our feeble eyes
Attempt in vain to grasp its awful size;
Let faith then still forebode, the Eternal Light
At last will show its grandeur to the sight.

2 Timothy, iii. 16. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

Psalm xcii. 5, 6. "O Lord, how great are Thy words![2] and Thy thoughts are very deep. A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this."

Psalm xxv. 14. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

1 Cor. xiii. 12. "Now we see through a glass darkly."

I CONSIDER it a proof of great proficiency in the art of prayer, if the suppliant have learned to prefer using the prayer of our Lord before every other; and if he be convinced that it is scarcely possible to conceive any different form in which a Christian could so perfectly comprise all that he has in his heart to say to the eternal God. What is true of this small portion of the divine Word may, with equal truth be affirmed of the whole; and blessed indeed is the Christian who has advanced so far as to find more edification in the sacred

[1] Heb. v. 13.

[2] Luther's vers.

Scriptures than in all other writings besides. How great the power of the Holy Spirit which reigns in it, is evident from the fact, that while to the eye of man the Book appears so homely in comparison with many others, and although history shows that, in the form in which we now possess it, it was almost casually put together, the effects it produces upon the human mind are so astonishingly great.

It is quite true that in the Scriptures, just as in the manger at Bethlehem, Christ the Lord is wrapped in poor and unsightly swaddling-clothes, and yet hither, from both east and west, have the wise men been constrained to come, and have prostrated themselves before the crib and presented their gifts. When first approached, how uncouth all about the Book appears from the beginning to the end! and yet, there can the soul make for itself a home, and feel happier in it than in all the other books in the world. *It is owing to the dark places in our hearts that we find so many places in the Bible dark.* Only let Christ wax greater and stronger within us, and forthwith He becomes greater and more glorious also in His Word. No experienced Christian will refuse to testify that he has discovered in the Bible a fountain which it is impossible to exhaust, according, as Luther so pleasantly says,—"For a long time past I have read through the Bible twice every year; and figuring it as a great and widespread tree, and all its words as twigs and branches, I may say that I have knocked at every one of them inquiring what grew on it, and how much it could produce, and never have I failed to beat down more or less fruit."

If, then, good reader, you desire to profit by the study of the sacred Scriptures, be not offended to find along with what is clear, not a little of which the meaning is still kept in reserve. Reflect that, although the heavenly Father certainly did think of your case when He caused the Book to be written for all the millions who dwell upon the earth, and intended that you too should find in it light and food, the herb to heal and the rod to correct thee, He still at the same time thought equally

of all His other children. The consequence is, as you may easily infer, that many things which are clear to them will be obscure to you, and that this field of the divine Word will yield its increase at one season, and that field at another. For example, there are passages in the Word which were written specially for the *men of learning* who are seeking for salvation; in other passages, the divine Wisdom had *kings* in view; and there are others, again, which provide for *little children.* In some of its sayings are scattered the seeds from which deep and lofty *thoughts* were to spring up and to shine like stars, and be guides to human knowledge. Others, again, were to produce great and worthy *achievements;* while others still were to *generate noble arts.* Of its beautiful flowers, some have exhaled their fragrance in the *East,* and some only in the *West.* Some of them regaled the *middle ages,* and others are specially salutary for *us.* Oh how great must have been the skill, and how immense the resources, of the host who could furnish so goodly a table for such a multitude of guests, whose wants were so diverse! It may well be that some of the dishes do not quite suit my taste; but what then? Would it be either respectful to the *entertainer,* or considerate towards those who sit at table with me, were I to find fault? What I cannot relish, I allow to pass; and this may well be done when there is such abundance offered. And who knows what may still happen? Time has not yet run its whole course. I doubt not that in His affluent Word the Lord has still in reserve for me many a dainty of which I at present have no conception, but which I shall enjoy hereafter, when, as the Scriptures express it, "my senses, by reason of use, shall have been exercised to discern both good and evil."[1]

The Saviour tells His disciples, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth."[2] And even so there is also much still in reserve for me in His holy Word which at present I cannot bear, and

[1] Heb. v. 14. [2] John, xvi. 12, 13.

which consequently I do not relish. Oh, then, for patience and humility!

Moreover, in all banquets it is the business of the *cook* to give the proper seasoning to the dishes; and here the cook is *Hunger*, and for skill in his art the world has long praised him. But not less does he excel as a *Teacher;* for to the humblest peasant he will expound the Gospel of St John, over which learned divines fatigue their brain, and will make it so intelligible, and accompany it with so many pleasing comments, that it inspires a heartfelt joy. This is the teacher whom the Saviour Himself so highly commended when he said, "*Blessed* are they that *hunger*."[1] By these remarks I do not intend to rob the learned men who interpret Scripture either of their livelihood or their reputation. Oh no; I am rather of opinion that many pious Christians are not sufficiently sensible how great the boon which has been vouchsafed by God to the Church in the beautiful commentaries on Scripture which the learned have written; and that these persons fall into a great mistake who attempt to descend the shaft of the divine Word with only the little lamp which the Holy Spirit has lit for *themselves*. The thing is wrong. It is the Holy Spirit's office to kindle the light by which we understand the Word; and the Holy Spirit belongs to no *single member*, but to the whole body of the Church; and therefore no member ought to disparage the gifts which have at all times been conferred upon learned men and ministers, seeing it is written that "the manifestation of His Spirit is given to every man *for the profit of all*."[2] Rather ought a humble-minded Christian to praise God that, with the help afforded him by the writings of the pious commentators of all ages, he can, as it were, enter upon the journey into the promised land, by which I mean the land of holy Scripture, in the company of so many pious and experienced guides. Do I not in this manner appropriate as my own the light which the Lord's Spirit has in all ages vouchsafed to help the Church to understand His Word?

[1] Luke, vi. 21.

[2] 1 Cor. xii. 7—Luther's vers.

From the fact that it is the Spirit alone who teaches us to understand the holy Scriptures, I deduce another doctrine—viz., that in reading them the true meaning can never be obtained *by pecking at the letters.* There was a time when I too, from strictly conscientious feelings, frequently plagued myself to construe this and that expression in the most literal sense, however harsh it sounded, and yet I could not but be aware that to that sense, other passages, and especially the general spirit of the Word, were contrary. This cost me great labour and anxiety; for well I knew that many lay stress upon the *spirit* only as a pretext for introducing their own spirit into the Word of God; and that when the doctrine or precept of any passage is too hard for them, they forthwith allege the spirit in order to expunge so much of the meaning as does not suit their taste. For, as Luther says, "Man's reason flutters and flits about the letter of the divine Word, until it forces it into a line with itself; which is just, in other words, to set the sun-dial right by the clock in one's chamber." If, however, it so be that only the *Spirit of God* can teach us to interpret His Word, no labouring with the letter can ever open the door of comprehension; and if a reader really desire to guard against the haughty delusions of human reason, he will find nothing so effectual as learning to discriminate correctly between the Spirit of God and the spirit of man. I therefore believe, that just as the meaning of a human author in any passage of his book can only be discovered by attending to what is his meaning in general—and just as the function of any single member in an organised body can only be ascertained by endeavouring to infer it correctly from the structure of the whole,—so likewise the true sense of a passage of Scripture becomes evident to the pious reader only in as far as he diligently compares and adjusts it to all the rest. Luther said of his own translations "that he preferred the plain sense to the litigious letter." It is true that scrupulous minds have often taken alarm at the exercise of this mental freedom with the Word, as if to depart in the very slightest from the letter were to *misconstrue* and

pervert it. Now, let no man dare for his life to wrest the Word of God. Even of that of an earthly monarch, the Emperor Conrad observed, it is not decent to twist or misinterpret an emperor's word. On the other hand, however, the chief of the apostles has averred that "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."[1] Tell me, ye who strain and force the letter, with however good intention you may do it, whether you recollect the manifold testimonies borne by history to the fact that holy Scripture has, like a mother's breast when too strongly pressed, emitted *blood* instead of milk? Heaven knows what monstrous fanaticism and dreadful bloodshed have issued out of that single text of the apostle when expounded by the flesh,—"Stand fast in the *liberty* wherewith Christ has made us free;"[2] or from the saying of our Lord Himself, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall *make you free*"![3] For beside these texts, many have wholly forgotten what is elsewhere averred: "Use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh;"[4] and again, "As free and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God;"[5] and once more, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not *expedient*."[6] When the apostle exhorts, "Children, obey your parents *in all things*,"[7] might not the flesh here twist the letter to the effect that children ought to obey their parents even in doing what is wicked and ungodly? Our Lord said, "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen nor thy rich neighbours; . . . but when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and thou shalt be blessed;"[8] and might not the flesh, laying a rough hand upon the letter, extort from it that we ought never to invite our relatives to dinner? The Lord hath also said, "Sell that ye have, and give alms."[9] And here, too, might the flesh strain the words to import that no Christian ought to possess private property; whereas numerous passages of Scrip-

[1] 2 Cor. iii. 6. [2] Gal. v. 1. [3] John, viii. 32.
[4] Gal. v. 13. [5] 1 Pet. ii. 16. [6] 1 Cor. vi. 12.
[7] Col. iii. 20. [8] Luke, xiv. 12, 13. [9] Luke, xii. 33.

ture imply the very opposite of all such carnal misconstructions. You see, then, that in this case there is no help save in seeking humbly to understand the Spirit of the Lord from the whole compass of sacred Scripture, in order clearly to apprehend the meaning of this or that particular passage.

To an unenlightened eye, the New Testament may indeed appear a very unsightly fabric, in the erection of which the Architect has committed great mistakes. He might, for example, have made the gable more straight, and raised story above story in a nobler style, and here and there altered for the better the position of a window or a door. In the end, however, we come to see that the architecture of the Word of God is of a piece with that of the whole world, and are constrained to give Him the glory, and confess here too, "Thou hast ordered *all things* by measure, number, and weight." As the *history of our Lord* constitutes the basis of our religion, to it has been assigned the foremost place among the writings of the New Testament, in order that with it every man may begin, and so lay a foundation for his faith. After this, when by means of the four Gospels the inquirer has become acquainted with the *Head*, the Acts of the Apostles instruct him how the bond that connects the Head with the *body and its members* was originally formed. He is then taught by the apostolical epistles the nature of *faith*, *charity*, and *hope*, by which the members of the primitive Church were nourished and upheld; until finally, in the Apocalypse of St John, he looks forward to the Church's *victory* through all successive ages up to the end.

Again, how wisely and graciously it has likewise been provided that the one great theme of the Gospel has reached us in a way to make the single ray of light be refracted into a variety of colours in order to show how rich it is, and to set open, as it were, several *doors*, by which the inquirer for salvation may find admission into the palace of truth! No doubt, when human reason begins to burrow, it is apt to fancy that in this matter it could have put God upon a better plan. Above all, the thought occurs whether it might not have been

more desirable and more conducive to general good, if, instead of the one great theme of Scripture being repeated under so manifold variations—of which the effect has been to stir up a world of *strife*—God had been pleased to give forth a single well-constructed system of faith,—such, for example, as a catechism of Christian doctrine drawn up by the holy apostles. But oh, how great would have been the loss, if in place of the narratives and epistles, which are, as it were, *segments* cut out of the actual life of the early Church, the Church had received a rule of faith and morals, in all points finished to its hand! What a loss in power, fulness, and multiformity must have been sustained if the new song had been sung only by one voice, and always in the same key! The number and variety of the voices that resound in the New Testament has had its echo through all ages of the Church's history.

> What here we find comprised in narrow bounds,
> A concert seems of well-accorded sounds,
> Striving, now mingled, now disjoined, which can
> Yield sweetest praise to Jesus, God and Man.
> Here low they peal like muttering thunder, there
> Like trumpets loud, which for the Judge prepare;
> Now trills, as if from well-toned flutes, the song,
> Now stately treads like choral chant along:
> The pomp of sound that thus enfolds its glory,
> *Has sent an echo through the world's long story.*
>
> Yes, the war-shout from *Paul's* stout breast that rings,
> Has roused a thousand warriors to the field;
> Nor less the notes from *John's* melodious strings,
> With peaceful echo, hearts unnumbered thrilled.
> How bright the fire from *Peter's* bosom flames
> In ardent souls which the keen spark has caught!
> While the disciples from the school of *James*
> Their hallowed *offerings* to the shrine have brought;
> It is the self-same theme, with variations,
> That sounds incessant through man's generations.

We are told that heavenly Wisdom constructed the great fabric of the world by "measure, number, and weight." If, however, we attempt to work her calculations, we prove wretched blunderers. At the outset, indeed, we promise our-

selves great success; but it happens to us here as Luther tells us is the case with jurists: "A first-year's student of law fancies himself quite a Justinian, and wiser than the whole faculty of doctors; the second year, he falls down to the doctor's level; the third, he becomes a licentiate; the fourth, a Bachelor; and in the fifth, he is a humble student once more." This is exactly what occurs to him who attempts to work the calculations of "measure, number, and weight" made by divine Wisdom for the beautiful fabric which it has constructed for us in the sacred Scriptures. The upshot always is, that we confess, as the wise Socrates did of the writings of a great philosopher, "*As much as I understand is so admirable, that I conclude that the part I do not understand must be the same.*"

The variety, however, which reigns in the fair garden of God's holy Word, so far as we can yet understand it, is really something wonderful and glorious. Most frequently the inquirer commences with the Gospel of John. Now that is actually a more difficult study than the other Gospels. At the same time, it is not by any insight into the *meaning* of it that souls are allured and attracted. Rather is it at first merely like a charming music, that on a fair summer's evening is wafted to us from beyond a river. The inquirer's heart begins gently to flutter and swell, so that he would fain ask of it, "What ails thee?" for he does not himself know. This is the way by which, in these days of ours, and in far the most numerous instances, souls are brought to Christ. Their case is precisely similar to that of the Samaritan woman. She too said to the Saviour, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not;" and asked it before she was rightly aware of what he had been speaking.[1] *Light, love, life,*—these are the tones which softly and gently float from beyond the stream, and hover and undulate around the unpeaceful heart. We trace in them the breath of the other world.

In this way the inquirer is brought to the feet of Jesus, and there he soon learns to see that these tones were but sweet

[1] John, iv. 15.

lures intended merely to bring the child into school. Once in school, however, he must set himself to *learn.* It is no longer with *sounds* that he has to do, but with *fruits;* and the more he becomes sensible of this, the more do the first three Gospels unfold themselves to him. By these we are informed what we must *renounce* in order to *receive;* and so advance to the foot of the New Testament Sinai, where we learn the strict discipline that reigns in the family of God. Embodied in a living form, this is shown in the *Acts of the Apostles*, which is an excellent and precious book, and one which Christians would find it profitable to study far more than they do. It constitutes the great ostensible attestation of the fact, that the Lord has kept His promise,—"I will not leave you comfortless;[1] I will come to you."[2] We here see how, after putting off His earthly body, He clothed Himself in the far greater *body of the Church.* Here we find the proof, that although He has gone to heaven, and now sits on the right hand of God, He, notwithstanding, still continues to be present with His members here on earth. At this stage we begin rightly to understand what the swelling and fluttering of the heart meant, when at the first we were lured by the love-tones of St John; and are now prepared to listen to Paul when preaching the *righteousness which is of faith.* This, in my opinion, is the highest class in the school of Christ, and there we are set to the study of James as well as of Paul. For when we have obtained an insight into the righteousness which is of free grace, it is time we should be made acquainted with the phantom shape of *faith*, and put its vigour to the test by the work of *love.* Hand in hand with James goes Peter, who teaches us that the "chosen generation, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, and peculiar people, ought to show forth the praises[3] of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light."[4] Moreover, if to any one has been vouchsafed the special gift of *intelligence*, he still continues to knock, and finds disclosed in the writings of

[1] In the orig., *forlown*.
[2] John, xiv. 18.
[3] Orig., *virtues*.
[4] 1 Pet. ii. 9.

St Paul the meaning of the motto which stands as superscription upon the history of the world, "Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things;"[1] or unsealed in those of St John the mystery of the Godhead, "In the beginning was the Word." Supposing the reader, however, to be one of the chosen number whom the Lord counts worthy to have a special word whispered in their ear, then perchance may he try his hand whether it will not be given to him to read a few lines of the book with the seven seals—that book of the world's history which no one was found worthy to open, save He of whom was sung the new song, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."[2]

O heavenly Wisdom, in deep humility I implore of Thee, open Thou mine eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of Thy law. So much have I already experienced of the blessing of Thy grace, that with full conviction I can say, "To whom shall I go but unto Thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life;" and yet, O Lord, many places in Thy Word are still dark to me. What I thirst for is to see Thee wholly in Thy light; and this my thirst is the thirst of *faith*, not of *doubt*. I am fully convinced that Thy darknesses are light, and that Thou wilt one day quench my thirst. Meanwhile, help me always to read Thy Word with a truly undistracted mind, and a reverent and humble heart, as the handwriting of a king ought ever to be read. In my approaches to Thee, cleanse my mind from all vain and fleshly thoughts, that I may not be listening to *myself* when I imagine that I am listening to Thee, and that my heart may reflect Thy divine thoughts unadulterated and pure. And inasmuch, O holy God, as Thy light is a light of life, grant me Thine aid, that all the light which beams into me out of Thy Word, may transform and purify me, and become in me a living power.

[1] Rom. xi. 36. [2] Rev. v. 9, 10.

20.

Thou understandest my Thought afar off.

God sees me through and through;
Oh, tell me where to hide!
His eye's a flame of fire,
Who can its glance abide?

My child, if thus His eye
The soul within thee scare,
Hasten into His heart,
And find a refuge there.

Psalm cxxxix. 1-12. "O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid Thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee."

O THOUGHT freezing with terror the bones and the marrow! O thought which also thrills with ecstasy the human heart!—*Of all that I am, and of all that I do, there is nothing*

which is not known to my God. Is it possible that a man who really believes in the existence of the Divine Being can bear this thought upon his mind without yielding entirely to its *dominion*, and giving it the control and government of his every inward motion and every outward act? It is a dreadful thing when the irreligious man, who will have nothing to do with God, revolts against the eye that seeth in secret, and looks upon faith as folly. And yet this is more easily understood than that a man can affirm his belief in a God who understands his thought afar off, and knows the word upon his tongue before it is uttered, and can yet, at the same time, continue *inert*. It is just a new instance showing the immeasurable difference between one kind of faith and another. For what is it that here happens to us? Shall I say that we do *not* really believe *at all*, or at least *not firmly*, what our mouth avers? We are told of the faith of Moses "that he endured as seeing Him who is invisible."[1] It appears, then, that faith is a mental eye, by means of which we can see: and accordingly, if I did *believe* in the Omniscient, would I not every moment likewise *see* Him, as if through a rent in the heavens; and would not *His* eye also meet *mine?* Would I not then perform my earthly pilgrimage in His company and under His inspection? And in the gaze of such an eye, how holy would my life become! How would they who are without the pardon of their sins dissolve like wax, and how would they who have received forgiveness become little and abased—oh how unspeakably little and abased! The firm conviction that a human eye, especially that of some great man, observed every step of my life, that the ear of some holy character listened to every word of my mouth, would exercise a wonderful power over my conduct. What, then, if it be the eye of *God*, what if it be the ear of *God*, that are my perpetual witnesses? And if I have no experience of such a power, must I say that I do not believe?

I am not sure that I should say that; I have, in fact, no doubt that I do believe. The truth rather is, that I do not

[1] Heb. xi. 27.

think about it. But then, if I really *believed* it, would it not also be the subject of *thought* to me? Here, however, it may be asked, Has a man, whose attention is engrossed by the avocations of life, time to retain all such pious thoughts in his mind? This is a question which I have long pondered, and I now see how the matter stands. We can be *mindful* of a thing without having defined and particular *thoughts* about it. It is with the understanding that we think; but thoughts can also be wrapped up in the feelings, and that too is being *mindful*. Is it not in our feelings that we continually bear about with us the consciousness of all that we are, and of the circumstances in which we happen to be placed, so that it even determines us how to act? If faith in God had only become flesh and blood within me—if it had permeated my inmost being as the vein of gold does the metals, or the sunbeam the water to which it gives warmth and transparency—would I not then be every moment as mindful of my God as I am of myself? I would be so; and when faith in that eye which understands our thoughts afar off, and sifts us through and through, does not accompany us in all our ways, this is only a sign that we do not yet properly *believe* in it.

How often a man flies with what he is doing from the *eye of his fellow-men*, and breathes freely the moment he is beyond their reach! but, alas! never thinks that there is an eye from which he cannot fly, and that that is the eye of his *Judge*. As he can never escape from the wide canopy of heaven that is over him, however long he may run, as little can he run anywhere away from the omniscient God. O thou great Being, whom I cannot see, but who art so near to me, let the thought of Thee teach me first of all to be *truthful* in word and deed! It is quite certain that we are all much worse than we fancy ourselves to be. Our self-love is too great to admit of our having any doubt upon the point. We have so strong an inclination to exhibit our motives to other *men* in too favourable a light, that it would be remarkable if the propensity to falsehood did not also manifest itself in our interviews with *God*. Where is

the man who has not at least occasionally put on a mask in his intercourse with his fellow-men? Nay, are there not many who actually never put it *off?* And thus they acquire the habit of taking it along with them into the presence of God. O Eye that hates all guile and falsehood, let me at least be truthful when I come before Thee! Thou hast put our sentence into our own hands, and if we only pronounce it upon ourselves, there is hope for us; but if we leave it for *Thee* to pronounce, there is none. As often as I look up to Thee, O holy Eye of God, I feel as if a heavenly voice came down into my conscience, and preached to me that, as Thy divine commandment requires, I ought instantly and fully and for ever to renounce all sin, and yield entire and unconditional obedience to Thee. How, then, could I possibly imagine myself in a fit condition to appear before Thee in the white robes of righteousness? How could I stand in Thy sight without a blush? When Christ looked upon Peter after his fall, oh what a look it was! "Peter went out and wept bitterly."[1] Holy Eye of God, so look upon me when I come into Thy presence, that I too may there weep such tears as his.

Especially disclose to me the impurity of my *motives.* I see too plainly that often when my actions seem to be prompted by the very best of these, they are but some new form of selfishness in disguise. Oh how happy shall I be, and how I shall adore and praise Thee in the other world, if I ever advance so far as to see that the love of Thee reigns in my heart above all other loves, and to see this as clearly and distinctly as I now see that I love myself more than everything else in the world, and even more than God!

And yet methinks I may venture to say that *I do love Thee.* The true and unfeigned desire I feel—though I should perish in the effort—to be quit of the love of myself and filled with the love of Thee, attests to me the fact. Even the disciple who denied Thee ventured to say, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee." And in spite of my

[1] Luke, xxii. 62.

denials, shall I not venture to say it too? O Thou who besettest me behind and before, and art acquainted with all my ways, is it not the fact that among the many propensities of my nature which revolt against Thy holy will, Thou nevertheless findest a bent of affection towards Thee,—a little flame which has been kindled by the Spirit? It is not that, to be sure, on which I place my hope. No, my hope rests on quite another ground. "The foundation on which I build is Jesus Christ my Lord." That is my cordial, my elixir of life, when I look at my Judge's eye and my bones begin to quake and my heart to melt. If I now tremble at the thought of the wondrous fellowship which subsists between Thy Spirit and my own, it is no longer the mere trembling of terror; rather is it the trembling of humble ecstasy, that Thou, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, condescendest to approach so closely to the heart of man, all sinful though it be, and there, if it will but give Thee leave, disclosest to it its guilt; nor that alone, but also forgivest it. I know that the eye of my *Judge* is also the eye of my *Father;* why then should I quake to think that it sees me through and through? At that thought he only needs to quake who will have nothing to do with Thee because he will not surrender himself to Thy sway. It is a case to which the words of Sirach apply: "As Thy ways are plain to the holy, so are they stumbling-blocks to the wicked."[1] O terrible thought for the ungodly man! that while he refuses to know anything of *Thee*, Thou knowest all about *him*. Attempting to fly from Thy presence, he takes Thee with him wherever he goes. His eye would fain elude Thine, and Thine eye catches his at every turn. O dreadful condition of the man who tries to *tear* himself out of the hands of God, but of whom God will not *quit His hold!* Sweet as the light of the sun is Thy presence to those who seek Thee, but verily to them that fly from Thee it is a consuming fire.

Verses 13-18. "For Thou hast possessed my reins: Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise

[1] Ecclus. xxxix. 24.

Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from Thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.[1] Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with Thee."[2]

Thou, O my God, seest me through and through, for by Thee I was made. I was the object of Thy thought before I existed, and in me Thou didst then behold a being destined to exist through all eternity. And if so, surely all that I now am must at every moment lie open to Thy view. Thou seest through both the past and the future of my history, and how can the present be concealed from Thee? Here, in the sphere of time, I grow up, and am becoming what I shall one day be. But Thou, Lord, in thine eternity already beholdest me matured. Other than this, human life has no fixed and solid basis. Were it not that all our days were from eternity comprehended in the hand and written in the book of our God, human life would be precarious and unstable, like the moonbeam that trembles on the rippling water. But, transitory and precarious though it be, it still is the quivering reflection in the sphere of time of a tranquil eternity with God. And whoever believes it to be this, may even now, amidst the tumult of this temporal state, pass his days in the tranquillity of the state which is to be everlasting.

Yes, O my God, the thoughts that arise within me when my spirit sinks in the contemplation of Thy being, are indeed a great sum. I lose myself while I ponder them; and when I again awake, I am still far from the goal. Out of every dark-

[1] *I.e.*, in the obscurity of the womb, like as in the depths of the earth.

[2] *I.e.*, though I lose myself in the contemplation of Thee, I never reach the end of it.

ness there arises a light, but only to terminate in darkness again, from which new light is evolved; and so on in perpetual vicissitude. The child who sat beside the fountain waiting till it should run dry, is an emblem of the human mind attempting to count Thy thoughts, O thou immeasurable One! Well might I quail at the infinitude of Thy being, did I not know that it is also the infinitude of love and mercy.

God is the fountain at which I drink,
God is the ocean in which I sink.
I gaze o'er the main, but no shore descry;
And helpless and feeble, alas! am I.

What then! Would I *measure* the flood immense?
No; losing of self all thought and sense,
Undaunted the awful deep I brave,
And sink and dissolve like a drop in the wave.

Thy *thought*, like Thy measureless *being*, no line
Can fathom, nor term nor bound confine.
Yet feel I no dread, for I think with delight
That Thy *love* is as vast and as infinite.

21.

The Lord doeth according to His will.

I am so sad and care-oppressed!
My friend, I well believe 'tis true;
I should be quite as much distressed,
Had I as many lords as you.
Lightning and hail, and fire and storms,
Cattle and neighbours, fowl and worms,
Of monarchs what a train!
For me I have one only Lord,
And all that host fulfil His word,
As body-guards the king obey;
And so I cast my cares away.

Dan. iv. 34, 35. "And at the end of the days, I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine under-

standing returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?"

SO spake the haughty monarch after he had experienced how heavy is the hand of Him who is the King of kings, and when his understanding returned to him. Alas! that man, the frail child of clay, whom every gust of fortune drives from his place like the dust of which he was made, should need so violent a tempest to awake him to the sense of his impotence, and never discovers that all human works and devices hang upon threads which meet in a single hand, until that hand wields the sceptre in wrath. They set to work, calculate, consult, and dispose of all things at their pleasure, never dreaming that without the *Amen* from on high all they do signifies nothing, and that at any moment a voice from heaven may say, "Take counsel together, and *it shall come to nought.*"[1] It is true man cannot altogether hide from himself, and least of all they who possess the largest share of earthly power—I mean kings and generals—that *to give checkmate* and *to be checkmated* are not a matter of mere human skill; for while, in a thousand instances, the most subtle devices are baffled, in how many more does that which they call chance decide the upshot and the victory? In place, however, of praising and honouring the Most High, they imitate the heathen, and prostrate themselves before the dumb idol of *Destiny*. And for what reason? For this, as it seems to me: They cannot brook the thought that the *success* of their enterprises should depend upon a supreme will; for to that supreme will they would then require to subject also their *decrees*. They there-

[1] Isa. viii. 10.

fore banish from their minds the thought that all the rods of earthly power are but offshoots from the lofty sceptre which rules the world, and should therefore adopt that sceptre's laws; and thus, having severed their enactments from God, they sever likewise their successes. O fools! you may perchance contrive to bury your terrors for a holy *Lawgiver*, but your terrors for a righteous *Judge* will still wake up; and the proud self-complacency which you may now and then feel on account of some successful enterprise, has far too little honey to sweeten the many draughts of wormwood which must be incessantly drained by him who sees mere human powers and projects conflicting upon the stage of the world. Who could bear to think that either the woof or warp of our life, the black balls or the white, were committed absolutely into *human hands*, whether our own or of other men? For my own part, I would rather say with the pious of former days,—

> The proverb may be well believed,
> 'Tis good to be by God deceived.

The thought that there is a hand which none can stay, may indeed excite alarm, but only in the breast of him who is unacquainted with the *heart* by which the hand is governed. To such a one the unknown God is indeed no better than a cold and silent destiny. To him, however, who is acquainted with the heart of God, there is nothing more blessed than the belief in the omnipotence of His hand. Already in the Book of Wisdom we read: "Forasmuch as Thou art righteous Thyself, Thou orderest all things righteously, thinking it not agreeable with Thy power to condemn him that hath not deserved to be punished; for Thy power is the beginning of righteousness, and because Thou art the Lord of all it maketh Thee to be gracious unto all."[1] The almighty hand in which I believe is the hand of eternal *righteousness*, *love*, *and wisdom*. How can I be afraid of it? Ought I not much rather to rejoice, for this very reason—viz., because the eternal righteousness, love, and

[1] Wisdom of Solomon, xii. 15, 16.

wisdom is also omnipotence, and therefore can never lack the means of gloriously accomplishing whatever its council has ordained? The utmost to which the natural man can attain, when the destiny which is his idol has shivered to pieces all that was dear to his heart, is *resignation*—that breastplate of ice which, after all, does nothing for the throbbing heart but cool down its fever from the hot to the shivering fit—that decent sort of despair which, like a poor funeral sermon, tricks out affliction with a few apothegms, and tries to dull the smart of grief with phrases learned at school—that frigid falsehood which at the best only helps us *to be willing* not to be miserable when our misery *is real and great.* It still leaves us slaves, forced to endure the will of a master who is a stranger and unknown to us. We, however, who through grace have become *children*, have something better than resignation. We *know* Him from whom the opposition to our will proceeds, and because we know Him we resign our own will to His. In this manner, to *bear* the will of God becomes a meat as much as to *do* it. And of him who has learned that lesson, no scourge or rod can ever more make a slave, for he continues free amidst all his sufferings. Do you know the beautiful sentiment once uttered by such an emancipated child of God? "If my God does not will as I do, I will as He does, and so we continue always good friends." That is a sentiment which has wings. With it I can soar into the clouds and warble my song like the birds of the air. Let resignation, with the ice and iron about her head and heart, attempt to follow me if she can. Children, a palace of ice with its silvery frostwork is a pretty object to look at, but only *from a distance;* and as for *inhabiting* it, no one would do so for all the world.

It appears a very simple truth that a mother's lap would be a more comfortable place, and yet there have been clever persons who had a different taste. It seems to me a strange thing, and well calculated to excite reflection, that God often offers to men wholesome bread, and yet that they prefer to have a *stone.* He, so to speak, places truth in their very path,

so that they can scarcely avoid striking it with their foot; and yet, when they encounter it they lift their foot, and with a long step pass over it and are away. I remember reading, in the work of an able and pious Mohammedan, that there are three degrees of confidence in God. The first is that in which we trust Him as a skilful *Agent* who will wisely conduct our cause to a successful issue; the second is that in which we trust Him as the babe trusts its *mother;* in the third we submit passively to Him as the corpse does to the hand of him whose business is to *dress the dead.* And this last kind of confidence, he says, is the best of the three. Certainly, however, the man must have had a peculiar taste. For where an option is allowed, who would not choose to serve his God *alive* rather than as a *lifeless corpse?* All honour to the dead! I cannot pass a body wrapped in a winding-sheet without pious and reverential thoughts. But yet, so long as I am among the living, I think it better to cast in my lot with them. Who would not rather be at his *mother's* side than in the hands of the undertaker?

And if in the Christian community there are numbers of Heathens, and even Jews, why should we wonder that there are also *Turks?*—men whose taste is as much of a piece with that of the pious Mussulman as one egg is like another. For instance, did we not hear them saying during the prevalence of the cholera, "Now is the time to embrace the *Turkish creed*"? In it they fancy that faith attains to full vigour and the heart to true rest. And to rest the heart does attain, but it is the rest of the *churchyard,* and not the rest of the *Sabbath.* The Turk has really no advantage over the Heathen idolater. What he believes in is a torpid omnipotence, which, as it lacks the eye of love and wisdom, is nothing but the same blind destiny in which the Heathen believed, and regarded as the supreme power which lorded it over all the other deities. For this reason, too, both Turk and Heathen refuse to employ the means and appliances provided by a kind Providence as our auxiliaries in the conflict with fate. We Christians, however,

know that the same hand which dispenses our afflictions furnishes also those medicinal agents which help to combat them. Hence even the sharp dispensations of God do not deaden our exertions, but rather rouse and stimulate our energies. Let others who know no better resign themselves with folded hands and shackled feet to impending calamities. For us Christians these ought rather to excite and evoke any powers within us that may be under restraint. In every individual there are powers which otherwise might perhaps lie dormant for ever, but which awake when the hammer of the divine dispensations deals its thundering strokes.

Alas! it is no easy task to exercise a truly Christian faith in the Omnipotent. How clearly the unbelief of my heart reveals itself afresh whenever God is pleased to beset my path with thorns! We know and repeat to ourselves a thousand times, that as the eternal wisdom, justice, and love is likewise omnipotence, it *is able* at every moment to execute what *it wills*. But notwithstanding, how hard we find it to acknowledge the disposal of Omnipotence in the thorns as well as in the roses that bestrew our path; how hard to believe that it is the will of God which calls us to *suffer*, not less than when it calls us to *act!* We nourish the delusion that it is only the act lying *behind* the suffering, the freedom *behind* the fetter, which God wills, and not the suffering and the fetter too. These, we fancy, have been interposed by some foreign hand; and in this manner we forego the blessing which the Lord intends afflictions and restraints and hindrances to convey. The idea that the divine Omnipotence removes distress, is one on which every man broods far longer than upon the thought that it is also divine Omnipotence that *inflicts* it, and that there must have been as good grounds for *sending* as for *mending* it. Men are always saying, "God will soon make it well again." Why do they not as often say, "It was God who made it what it is"?

> Think not that from some *foe* the burden came,
> And all you owe to *God* is strength to bear it.

The cross, the curb, are His, because the same
Almighty power must will who could repair it.
Seek then, my child, thy Father's mind to know
In what befalls thee, be it *weal or woe.*

Almighty God, whose hand none can stay, and of whom none can ask, "What doest Thou?" I reckon it a blessed thing that all that I am and all that I possess are solely *at Thy disposal.* Weak as a child, why should I resist Thee? inasmuch as I must perish if I do. Foolish as a child, why should I question Thee? Thou knowest best what Thou doest. I count it my greatest happiness to have Thee for my absolute God, and to know that I am the work of Thy hand. And why not, assured as I am that Thine omnipotence is but the omnipotence of wisdom and love? With such a belief, a man ought always to be strong. There are, however, seasons in which I feel myself very weak; but oh, do Thou arm me with that strength of mind which can taste in the bitters Thou offerest, no less than in the sweets, Thy loving and almighty will. What though the cup be bitter, ought it not to be sweetened by the hand which presents it? Let suns then be extinguished, and worlds sink into the abyss, I have learned, O Almighty God, to know Thee so well, as never more to have any doubts about Thee. I wrap myself in the outermost hem of Thy mantle, and shut my eyes in soft repose, like the babe upon the mother's lap, for I know whose are the eyes that watch over me for ever.

O what a blessed thing to rest
Soothed in Jehovah's loving arms!
As sleeps the babe on mother's breast,
Safe from all troubles and alarms.

Cheer up, my soul! thy place remains
Appointed on the eternal hills;
And what a heart of *love* ordains,
A hand *omnipotent* fulfils.

22.

He is angry with the Wicked.

God is a healthful light or a consuming fire—
Choose which thou wilt, and take thy heart's desire;
His children all bask in the cheerful rays,
The stubborn sinner brooks the angry blaze.

ROM. i. 18. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness."

HEB. xii. 28, 29. "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire."

1 PETER, i. 17. "And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear."

"WHO knoweth the power of Thine anger? who fears as he ought Thy wrath?"[1] was the exclamation of the veteran Moses. Alas! is it not an exclamation which, in these days of ours, ought to be rung into the ears of men from every pulpit? Blindness has fallen upon this generation. "Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; Thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction."[2] God is love; and therefore, in place of keeping to Himself the felicity and the blessings which He enjoys, He is willing to share them with us. If men, however, despise and reject them, His love is converted into a consuming fire. In His inmost heart He desires to *bless;* and therefore it is written, "He doth not afflict *willingly*, nor grieve the children of men."[3] But should the children of men refuse His blessing, He is quite

[1] Psalm xc. 11—Luther's vers. [2] Jer. v. 3. [3] Lam. iii. 33.

as much in earnest to smite and retaliate. When the terrors of conscience awaken in the sinner—when it becomes openly manifest that iniquity is the people's ruin—when the wicked fall into the pit which they themselves digged, and when sin brings forth death—who will deny that these things are the wrath of God against unrighteousness? No doubt, God's wrath is different from the wrath of man;[1] but neither does He *love* in man's passionate and capricious way. They who deny His wrath must have had little experience of the heat of temptation, when, according to Luther, "Conscience sweats as in a bath, and the Almighty casts the sinner into the furnace: as it is written, 'Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof;'"[2] when He sets in array before his eyes all his secret misdeeds, so that he is forced to cry out with David, "Thine arrows stick fast in me, and Thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh because of Thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me."[3] Can any one fail to see in all this the expression of a keen and active abhorrence of iniquity? Were one to call it mere *love*, he would feel that he was lying to himself. No doubt, the love of God is not wholly extinguished, although His anger is so hot. For if the fierceness of His wrath have produced its due effect, the sun of His grace will rise again. Has He not said, "I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal"? "In my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee."[4] Nor is that all; for inasmuch as in His inmost heart He desires to bless all the works of His hand, His wrath itself is a *wrath of love*, which no doubt bespeaks His abhorrence of sin, and His determination to punish it by the penalties it inflicts, but which likewise intends to soften the heart, and while destroying the sin, to save the sinner. Accordingly, His *wrath* and

[1] James, i. 20. [2] Ezek. xxii. 21. [3] Psalm xxxviii. 2-4.
[4] Deut. xxxii. 39; Isa. lx. 10.

vengeance are poured out in proportion as the stubborn heart refuses to melt in the divine furnace, and merely feels the *pain*, but does not reap the *profit*, of the chastisement. While, on the other hand, in the same degree in which the stubborn heart *consents to soften*, the Lord shows forth His *love*. Just as in the promises and threatenings of the law, so in all the punishments He inflicts, He declares, "Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death."[1] In this view there is, no doubt, truth in what the poet says:—

> "God is as near to Satan as to the Seraphim—
> The difference is that Satan dares to turn his back on Him."

But just because Satan turns his back upon God, God is near to Satan, not as the Sun of grace, but as a consuming fire; whereas, would Satan only turn his face to God, God would then be near to him too as a Sun of grace. And inasmuch as the ground of His being is goodwill to all the creatures, so that He would rather bless than destroy them, the Scriptures declare with greater truth that God is *far* from the sinner who turns his back upon Him, and to whom, therefore, He manifests Himself as a consuming fire, although even in that distance there is still on God's part a certain interest in the sinner, for in punishing He still cleaves to him, and does not wholly cast him off.

Give me, O holy Being, enlightened eyes that I may never suffer the weakness of the flesh to blind me, but may still hold fast the persuasion that Thou art in earnest alike in Thy wrath as in Thy love. By grace Thou hast adopted me to be Thy child, but even Thy grace I may turn into licentiousness, and the old man within me may from time to time become manifest in works of the flesh. And when such things happen, do I not, O Lord, subject myself to Thy righteous indignation? Even we who are Christians ought, as is expressed in Thy Word, "to pass the time of our sojourning here in *fear*." True, it is also written that "perfect love casteth out fear;" but the fear

[1] Jer. xxi. 8.

which is there meant is only servile fear. Even the *reverence* of a child towards its parent is a sort of fear, and there must always be reverence in the love of the inferior to the superior. "Ye call Him Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work," are the words of an apostle. Forasmuch, then, as our Judge is our Father, we certainly do not fear Him as bondsmen; but being, as we are, frail children, we do bear about with us a reverential awe of Him. It is by no means indifferent whether as Christians we believe or reject those stern examples of God's wrath which are presented to us in Scripture, because our love, as yet, is far from being sufficiently strong to beget that sensibility of conscience which shrinks even from the secret thought that is unfit for the divine eye. Necessity is therefore laid upon us to pass the time of our sojourning here *in fear*, and in fear to seek to serve and please Him. In the same way, however, as the wrath of God is a wrath of love, so likewise is the fear of His *children* also a fear of *love*. In truth, what is there of which *we*, whom the Son hath made free and translated into the kingdom of grace, are afraid? Is it strokes of the rod? Is it chastisements by the hand of justice? Yes, doubtless, these are things which we too fear; but we fear something worse—we fear to lose the *heart of God* by our sins.

> Chastise me for my wanderings with the rod,
> And I the pain, however great, will bear;
> But if Thy heart Thou bar to me, O God,
> That punishment will drive me to despair.

I now also understand what was meant by those devout souls whose desire it was rather to be in hell with the love of God than without His love to be in heaven, and who were ready to resign all His gifts, and eternal salvation to boot, were but the Giver to be made their portion, as one of them thus sang:—

> "Who only asks for gifts, his worship pays
> Not to God, but the creature, when he prays."

Yes—to lose the heart of God is the greatest of all losses.

What we have most to fear in punishment is its tendency to harden the heart. But now that in Christ Jesus I have a gracious God, I am thankful to say my heart is becoming softer; and so no longer does the face of death stare out upon me from my chastisements. Rather is it the water of life which flows forth. I look into the open heart of my Father, from which they all proceed, and I see that He Himself suffers in all the sufferings He inflicts upon His child; and, assured of this, I exclaim with exultation—

O Love Eternal, if the rod alone
Avail to turn my wandering heart to Thee,
And touch it with Thy holy flame, strike on!
Spare not, though life and limb the forfeit be.
Of every stroke the bitter pain Thou provest
Not less than I, O ever faithful heart!
Shall I not love Thee, then, as me Thou lovest?
Smite on! I flinch not, keen though be the smart.

23.

Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord.

God is all love, is now the general plea,
Say of what sort, perchance we may agree.
The noble name is deemed of little worth,
And used to baptise many a spurious birth.
Mean you the love the monarch's breast that fills
Who scaters blessings o'er a thousand hills,
Who high and low with equal eye regards,
And gives to all desert its due rewards?
Such is the love of God, but love like this
A spark of generous wrath accompanies;
For majesty when wronged by wrath must prove
That royal HONOUR'S *matched with royal* LOVE.

JER. xxxii. 19. "Thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."

DEUT. xxxii. 35. "To me belongeth vengeance and *recompense.*"

PSALM xviii. 26. "With the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure; and with the froward Thou wilt show Thyself froward."[1]

MATT. xvi. 27. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works."

BESIDE the thousand loving admonitions and sweet enticements addressed to us in the Word of God, how many thunderbolts of vengeance and lightnings of wrath are likewise there! Even before the sacred Scriptures had become for me the Word of truth, never could I persuade myself that the God who was so often preached from the pulpit as wearing perpetually a gracious smile, covering every sore, and always and everywhere sparing and caressing, was the God of the Bible. A very different Being is He of whom in the Old Testament it is written, "Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with Thee."[2] And again, "The Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God."[3] And again, "The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man, He shall stir up jealousy like a man of war."[4] A very different God, indeed,—and that those preachers themselves admit. But not less is the God of the New Testament a very different Being—He who, when Israel knew not the time of her visitation, caused Jerusalem to be kept in on every side, and the abomination of desolation to be planted in the holy place, and left not there one stone upon another:[5] He who, in the infant Church, punished with instant death the lie told by two Christians to an inspired apostle:[6] He who, as much as the God of the Old Testament, is a God of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.[7] What an over-

[1] *I.e.*, Thou treatest every one according to his deserts. [2] Psalm v. 4.
[3] Deut. iv. 24. [4] Isa. xlii. 13. [5] Luke, xix. 42-44; Matt. xxiv. 15.
[6] Acts, v. 10. [7] Heb. x. 27; xii. 29.

powering impression of the severity of the divine justice we receive, when we find the Saviour, while with all gentleness and love He weeps over the ungodly nation,[1] nevertheless intimating the inevitable divine judgments which would accompany His own rejection! And again, when, although Himself overwhelmed by the great waters of tribulation, and upon the way to the place of execution, He cannot help pointing to the dark cloud of wrath which He saw gathering over the city, and utters the affecting and significant words: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"[2]

But why should it be necessary to collect testimonies of Scripture, and expatiate at large respecting the wrath of God against sin? When acts speak there is no need of an orator; and oh how loudly have acts spoken here! Let a man only read the Books of Samuel and the Kings. So closely do we there find punishments treading on the heels of sin, and the scourge following rebellion against God, that they may truly be called *Journals of Divine Justice.* In profane history, likewise—although we require to finger the leaves somewhat more—still we now and then come to a page where, upon a ground all worn and yellow with tears, great and solemn letters start into the view of even the most careless reader, and proclaim aloud, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked."[3]

No doubt it does sometimes appear that Divine Justice is like a great monarch who has fallen asleep, and with whom his courtiers meanwhile make sport, but who from time to time wakes and starts up, and whose every glance is then a flash of lightning, which shivers into pieces and prostrates all around. Still the footsteps of the indignant Monarch, when thus roused,

[1] Luke, xix. 41; Matt. xxiii. 37. [2] Luke, xxiii. 28-31. [3] Gal. vi. 7.

must certainly have been often and audibly heard in every corner of the earth; for there is scarce a nation to be found which does not believe that there is a God who governs the world *according to the eternal laws of justice.* One of the sages of antiquity, when asked the question, "What is God doing?" returned the eminently beautiful answer, "He is humbling the lofty, and exalting the humble." The Grecian poets likewise spoke of a Goddess of justice, who holds in her hand a sharp and bitter sword, and with it transfixes the heart; for not unobserved remains the crime of him who audaciously violates the divine law. She has officers in her train, and their names are *Destruction*, *Curse*, and *Punishment.*[1] Under the title of Nemesis, too, they venerated a power which, when human pride oversteps its appointed bounds, forces it back into its place, and with its lightning dashes to pieces whoever dares to oppose it. Experiences and proofs of this cannot have been hard to find, for otherwise how would the proverbs of so many nations propound such serious lessons as the following: "Ill-gotten gold is no gain;" "Unfairly won is soon wasted;" "The crop will show how the field was ploughed;" "Pride goeth before a fall;" "Honesty is the best policy;" "Truth will be out though hid in a well"? In no country of the earth, not even among the giddiest and most frivolous nations, would you easily find an individual whom an inward feeling of awe would not restrain from such a pitch of insolent blasphemy as impiously to challenge Divine Justice *to a trial of strength.* Men are capable of *forgetting*, but they are not bold enough to *defy* it. Just as in a dark night a man would shrink from calling aloud upon *himself*, lest, perchance, some voice might answer; even so will the dread of a response deter him from invoking the *Avenger in heaven.* Where any case of the kind has occurred, there have not been wanting, even in our own day, dreadfully serious manifestations "that God still lives." The cases, though isolated, are yet at the same time so decisive, that even irreligious men find it hard to attribute them to

[1] Æschylus.

chance. Thus, among other things, witnesses of unimpeachable veracity tell us of persons insulting the crucifix, and defying Him whom it represents, and whose challenge was answered in a very terrible way.

Is, then, the *amendment* of the sinner to be looked upon as the sole object of such penal justice? I have made observations upon myself while correcting children who were dear to me, and it is true that we punish them *with* love, but not altogether *from* love. The punishment involves a certain element of *retribution*, and that in proportion as the culpable child shows himself headstrong and incorrigible. Supposing it to be known, with all conceivable certainty, that within a given time—until, for example, a new preceptor was employed, or a new method of training adopted—no change in the behaviour of a perverse and disobedient child could be expected, it would not be possible, during the interval, to treat such a child in exactly the same way as other children; and this impossibility would arise, not from any apprehension that our kindness would be abused, but from a conviction of the necessity of *retribution*, or, in other words, a sense of *justice*. On the other hand, a child, after some flagrant transgression, may be deeply penitent, and yet we feel constrained to punish it. Nay, it has happened to myself to hear a young offender in the deepest contrition say, "I feel that what I have done is so wrong that I must be punished." Moreover, the punishment inflicted by the magistracy is merely an image of that of God. And why does the magistrate punish? The sentence of death upon the malefactor runs in these terms: "*As a just punishment to himself, and a warning example to others.*" Accordingly, neither the example to others, nor yet the malefactor's own amendment, is the chief reason for his punishment—but retribution. He has infringed the general law, and therefore is his individual right infringed, and violence done to his property or person. The weight of his transgression is ascertained, and with the same measure with which he did mete is it measured to him again. That is *justice* among men: and can the case

be different with the justice of God? Sin is an aggression upon the right which pertains to Him as absolute Lord over His creatures; and is it not just to measure to the sinner again with the same measure with which he measured unto God? "In the light of the king's countenance," says Solomon, "is life; and his favour is as a cloud of the latter rain."[1] Yes; but would we be conscious of this if it were not also true that "the fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul"?[2] The love of God is indeed a good thing; unless, however, it be seasoned by a spice of His holiness, one is tempted to think of the saying of Job: "Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg?"[3] Oh that our preachers would but infuse into their insipid discourses upon the character of God some portion of that stern and pungent salt so plentifully supplied by the writings of the prophets! The Word of the Lord has said, "Every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt."[4] In the oblations of the Old Testament, honey, that so easily turns into acid, was forbidden to be used; they required to be salted with salt: and shall not the God who calls for pungent salt upon every oblation which is to be acceptable to Him, have pungent salt also in His own nature? That the Lord is *an avenger and will repay*, is the true salt in the belief of the Divine Being.

Yes—he who has become sensible of God's righteous indignation against himself, though he may once have allowed such sermons to slip softly down his throat, will at last surfeit at their descriptions of God's love, which are as tasteless as the white of an egg, and destitute alike of earnestness and pith. "Hast thou found honey?" says Solomon; "eat so much as is *sufficient for thee*, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it."[5] How they come to preach in this style is obvious enough. That which a man has not in himself neither does he ascribe to his God.

[1] Prov. xvi. 15. [2] Prov. xx. 2. [3] Job, vi. 6. [4] Mark, ix. 49. [5] Prov. xxv. 16.

All for themselves a God devise,
And so the true God they despise.

No wrong whatever is done to love by the belief of a God who is the avenger of evil. If the irreligious man will submit to be warned—if, when taught to his cost what the infringement of God's sacred and inviolable law entails, he take home the admonition and learn to do what is right and good, he has this at his option. And the like obtains with us who have the grace to be His *children*. The corrections to which we, no less than others, are subjected, bear, as a blessed fruit, our escape from condemnation, according to the words of the apostle, that "when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."[1] From the fact that God exercises rigour even towards His children, and overlooks none of our faults, unbelievers ought to see what will one day be the issue for them. As St Peter says, "The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin with us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?"[2] If, however, the stubborn heart refuse to learn the lesson taught by divine retribution, it is free to do so, but does it at its own risk; nay, under the strokes of the divine hand, it may even proceed from bad to worse, and from its impure depths foam out murmurs and curses and blasphemies. That, however, does not disturb divine justice. When cast into the wine-press, the grapes will emit the juice that is in them, whether it be sweet or sour. The knave who lurks in the heart would as certainly have discovered himself in the gentle sunbeams—according to the saying of the Emperor Charles, that the sun melts only wax, and hardens only mud. This process goes on until it reaches the judgment of obduracy, and then sin itself becomes the sinner's scourge, so that he is as tow, and what he does as a spark, and both burn together.[3] Even, however, in a case like this, where the vials of divine wrath are emptied upon an ungodly man, still, properly speaking, the love of God is never clean

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 32. [2] 1 Pet. iv. 17. [3] Isa. i. 31.

gone. Must it not be said, that so long as He lifts the rod to smite and chastise him, it is a sign that He still bears him on His heart, or at least in His memory, and has not set him loose from all restraint? And even for the most wayward transgressor, is there not always at least a glimmer of hope that as long as he walks linked to the chain of divine justice, that chain will one day draw him back to the Great Being from whom by his sin he would fain make his escape?

There is, however, no longer any *fear* of God left in this generation. The perpetual preaching about the love of the universal Father has preached it quite away. No doubt, fear is not the *end* of wisdom, but the Bible tells us that it is the "*beginning* of it."[1] And as there is fear in reverence, it may in this sense be said even of the child of God who has found grace, that he continues to fear to the last, as the apostle writes: "If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear."[2] I clearly perceive that were the *fear* of God to regain its due place—were but that shadow of a king whom they have set upon the throne of the world, and from whose feeble hand every child can wrest the sceptre with impunity, to resign his seat to the King of whom it is written, "God judgeth the righteous, and is angry with the wicked every day,"[3] then should we again find among us penitent hearts and awakened consciences inquiring after the way of life. I have observed that wherever in the *Catholic* Church faithful pastors have preached the way of life, spiritual hunger and thirst have always been excited to a greater extent than in ours. From what other cause does this arise, than because our people have been surfeited with the continual preaching of the Gospel without repentance; whereas among them the preaching of repentance and of the law abounds, while there is a dearth of the preaching of the Gospel?

Yes, verily, O holy God, thou art as long-suffering as holy. In a world which doubts whether justice is the pillar of Thy

[1] Psalm cxi. 10; Prov. i. 7. [2] 1 Pet. i. 17. [3] Psalm vii. 11.

throne, and where on every hand Thy grace is turned to licentiousness, how great the forbearance with which Thou dost punish, and how long Thou dost wait for the repentance of the sinner! But Thy jealousy will at last be roused, and after Thy mercies have been all despised, will discharge itself without reserve. Stir up, O holy God, in my own heart a true and lively fear of the rod of Thy justice. I know that when Thou threatenest I can shelter myself beneath the skirt of Thy robe; but I also know that should that betray me into security, the very shadow of Thy hand above my head will turn into a stormy cloud; and therefore, so long as I sojourn here below, I will pass the time in fear, and in humbly looking up to Thee. I know that wert Thou to deal with me according to the rule of justice alone, Thou hast a perfect right to condemn me, and that I owe my salvation to grace alone.

24.

The Goodness of God leadeth to Repentance.

God will His rights assert one day;
And if in time He make delay
He has a reason good, which is,
That all eternity is His.

MATT. xiii. 27-30. "So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest, while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest."

ROM. ii. 4, 5. "Despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

THEY seem to me a peculiar class of men who affirm that they find no difficulty in firmly and steadfastly believing that there is a holy God, and that He governs this ungodly world, with all the other doctrines declared to us in sacred Scripture; and that their faith never begins to waver or fail until they come to the article of Christ the Son of God dying for our sins and rising again for our justification. Verily, when a man runs his head against that article, it is quite certain that a great breach must long before have been made in his faith—viz., at the articles designated by Scripture as the *principles* of the doctrine of Christ: such as repentance, faith toward God, and God's temporal and eternal judgment against sin.[1] To myself, at least, no task ever appeared so hard as, in a world like that before our eyes, to believe with a firm and unwavering heart that it is governed by *a God of love and justice.* When I set in array before my mind all the shocking things of which human life is full—the rapacious tooth of the tiger, the serpent's poisonous bite, sea-storms, and earthquakes, famine and pestilence, madness, with the whole train of diseases and bitter death—I cannot help wondering that King Alphonso of Aragon should have been the only fool who proposed to Divine Wisdom to manufacture a far better world than the worm-eaten fabric we now behold. And if I further picture to myself all the scandals in the *moral* world, the fierce and poisonous tooth with which man attacks his fellow, the storms and earthquakes of passion and folly, and the fearful infection with which each communicates to his neighbour the poison of sin, and thereby destroys him,—ah me! whoever in these circumstances can

[1] Heb. vi. 1, 2.

freely and firmly believe in the government of the world by a God of righteousness, that man I look upon as a saint of the first degree; and humbly will I go into his school, that I may learn of him what faith is.

When the heart is thus softened at the thought of the wickedness of the world, how comfortable and edifying the doctrine which our blessed Lord teaches in the parable of the tares and the wheat! You ask, "Why do the tares grow so rank?" "Friend," replies Christ, "it is *because the time of the harvest is not yet come.*" Observe, the servants of the householder also would fain have forcibly extirpated them; but what did he call out? "Be not so rash; let both grow together until the time of harvest." It must be remembered that the tares spoken of in this passage are, according to the original Greek, the *mock-wheat* which, while still unripe, resembles the good as much as any one thing can resemble another, and indeed cannot be distinguished from it until it reaches maturity. Even so upon the theatre of the world, where God is merely rearing children for Himself, it cannot be discovered who are the good wheat and who are the tares until both are *ripe*. If the Lord had commanded fire to come down from heaven upon Samaria, as His disciples wished, how could Samaria have received the word of God?[1] Had Nineveh been overthrown, according to Jonah's desire, how could it have been converted? If a Saul, when breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the Church of God, had been instantly cut down, how could a Paul have become a preacher of righteousness? For this reason, dear reader, let us cautiously guard against being over-rash, and learn from the Saviour's beautiful parable to be *prudent* in our judgments, *indulgent* in our behaviour, and *confident* in our anticipation of a harvest-time at last. You may imagine that the householder is still asleep. Nothing, however, escapes his notice. And when the time of harvest comes, he will arise like a strong man in the midst of a secure world, and will then as surely carry into effect the separation

[1] Luke, ix. 54; Acts, viii. 14.

of the goats from the sheep, and of the tares from the wheat, as for the present he mercifully postpones it. *At last* does not mean *never*.

In truth, were there to be no other judgment than that which takes place in time, we could hardly blame a man for doubting if the sceptre that governs the world is really in the hand of Justice. Here and there, it is true, Justice has written her name upon the page of history, in characters so large that, as the prophet says, "he that runneth may read." Yes, read it *the simplest can, the unbeliever must.* And not less true is it that the Gentile nations in all ages have believed in a retributive power which, according to Mary's song, "hath showed strength with His arm, and scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts; and put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree."[1] It must, however, be admitted, that the times in which this has been seen are but as a few transparent spots in the dark stream of the history of mankind; and that the lesson taught by such particular instances can never possibly hold its own against that which, as appears to the carnal eye, one day uttereth unto another—viz., that the righteous is trodden under foot, and the ungodly stands upon his dust. This is what Asaph of old deplored when he said: "As for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. . . . When I thought to know this, it was too *painful* for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end."[2] Yes, we must mark the *end;* truth conquers at *last.*

So very great is the long-suffering of God, that one might almost fancy He paid slight regard to what the devil and the world are doing against Him. If, however, you suppose that, because His goodness delays the punishment and waits for the repentance of the sinner, His justice will be defrauded of its dues, Beware! For though He may delay for a season, He has yet spread so many nets and snares, that there is no pos-

[1] Luke, i. 51, 52.

[2] Psalm lxxiii. 2, 3, 16, 17.

sibility of escape from His hands. "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes."[1] So speaks the Lord: and again, "Thinkest thou I will hold my peace for ever, that thou fearest me not?"[2] Hear, too, the words of David: "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved;" but then he subjoins, "Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled."[3] As Luther expresses it, the Lord our God often treads so softly among the wicked and perverse race of men that none can hear the sound of His steps; but this He does only for a time, for at length all His thunders come down in a heap. To hard hearts He will remit nothing.

God walks unseen among the sons of men—

> "And silent is His step, but near the goal
> He rushes with the thunder of decision."[4]

When it is said of Him whose throne is in the heavens, that He *laughs* at those who rage and plot against Him, His laugh lasts only for a while. Soon there follows, "Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure."[5] For a great instance of this, even in the present world, attend diligently to what Christ in the Gospel[6] says of unbelieving Jerusalem, which God for a long time visited with His grace, but from which at last He did not withhold the rod.

His justice is not defrauded of its rights, although in His forbearance He delays to punish; for as the apostle here says, "His goodness is but an *exhortation to repentance*." How sweet, but at the same time how terrible, a truth it is, that the morsel of bread which an ungodly man puts into his mouth, the sunbeam which warms his face, and the rain which drops from heaven to fertilise his field, are all calls to repentance, and all come from the God who maketh the sun to rise upon

[1] Psalm l. 21. [2] Isa. lvii. 11—Luther's vers. [3] Psalm xxx. 6, 7.
[4] Klopstock. [5] Psalm ii. 4, 5. [6] Luke, xix. 41.

the evil and the good! Observe well when He thus visits thee, and thou wilt see, that while He has only blessings in His hand, He has at the same time a rod beneath His robe; and if His blessings do not soften thy heart, He will immediately smite thee with His rod—for none knows better when to use the *staff of beauty*, and when the *staff of bands*.[1]

It is further written, "After thy impenitent heart thou treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath." Woe's me! what an alarming word is this! Every grace which I despise, turns, it appears, into a judgment. "The witling," says Luther, "stands in the street and gapes with astonishment that it is not the good, although they are a privileged class, but the wicked, who are allowed by the long-suffering of God to grow up like trees planted by the rivers of water."[2] But lo! all the while, His righteous judgments, like the grains of sand in the hour-glass, are silently but ceaselessly running their course. Not a blessing received with impenitence but changes into anger. The more they are in number, so many more are the vials of wrath treasured up against the day of judgment, and which shall then infallibly be discharged. Behold, the jovial drunkard sits and drains with relish glass after glass, but all the while does not mark the hand which is writing out the reckoning—that reckoning which shall one day be presented to him, and which his whole substance will be insufficient to pay.

Such, O gracious God, have often been my reflections when I beheld Thee crowning the head of the ungodly with fulness of joy and blessing. These sparkling brilliants, methought, may they not perhaps be coals of fire? But have I likewise attended to my own case? Who knows but that others may see many a bright gem glittering upon my head, for which I have never repaid Thee with thanks? Woe's me! if these too shall one day turn into burning coals! Oh how rich the goodness with which Thou daily leadest me to repentance! And oh how wicked and unfaithful my heart, which needs so many

[1] Zech. xi. 7. [2] Psalm i. 3.

to preach repentance to it from the pulpit, although, were the Holy Spirit to take away the blindness from my eyes, every mouthful of bread, every gentle shower, and every warm sunbeam, would discourse to me upon the same theme! Behold, O my God, I approach Thy throne as a child humbled and abashed, and my prayer to Thee is that Thou wouldst still delay to punish me, for I will yield to Thy goodness which leadeth me to repentance.

O God, whose eye my inmost bosom sounds,
My debt of gratitude I long to pay;
Let then its fiery glance purge clean away
The selfish dross that in my heart abounds.

It is a thought which well may fear inspire
Even in the holy mind, that every grace
Which cheers the sinner, when he disobeys
Turns on his guilty head to angry fire.

Awhile he triumphs, when, unmarked or spurned,
Mercy with blessings makes his cup o'erflow;
But even amidst his exaltation, lo!
The *gifts* of God have into *judgments* turned.

25.

The disposing of the Lot is of the Lord.

What can it be but chance? I hear thee say,
And that to loose the knot's an easy way;
But keep thy mind from CHANCE-BRED FANCIES *clear,*
And from the world all chance will disappear.

PROV. xvi. 33. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord."

LUKE, x. 31. "And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side."

BY *chance!* So then even the Holy Scriptures speak of chance. There are persons who feel a scruple to do so. There can, however, be no sin in the *word*, seeing it has been used by the Saviour Himself. But what is chance? It certainly is not a deity, a fate coequal with, or even superior to, the Almighty Father of heaven and earth. No; it is nothing but a vocable which we employ when there is a gap in our wisdom, and our insight into the connection of cause and effect is at fault. It is more a name for something in *ourselves* than for anything in nature without. We designate as chance, effects which do not appear to have proceeded from purpose and design. Thus we call it chance when any event occurs which was not intended *by man;* just as the Lord here says, "By chance there came down a certain priest that way." And in that case the word has an objectionable meaning. We also speak of chance, however, when a thing happens which seems to us contrary to the plan and intention of *God*, and then the word is a mere word. We speak of *necessity* when the weary veteran, after the eyes—the windows of sense—have been closed, and the door of the mouth seldom opens, and the grey head has long worn the livery of death, dies by the decay of nature. For we perceive that there is a plan and design in the mowing down of the grain when it has reached maturity, and in the discharge of the labourer from the field when his blunted tools are of no further use. When, however, *the youth* is unexpectedly snatched away, by such a casualty as the fall, perhaps, of a tile from the roof; when the goodly framework is shattered before the spirit it contained has unfolded its wings, —we then speak of *chance*, because we do not here see the divine *purpose.*

Agar, the son of Jakeh, affirms of himself that he was the most foolish of the sons of men.[1] I think, however, I could mention several of the sons of men in whose favour he would be forced to resign his vain boast. Among others, I allude to those wiseacres who opine that the limit of all thought and

[1] Prov. xxx. 1, 2.

knowledge is where *their* thoughts begin to run dry. But very poor indeed would we, the children of men, be, if what we cannot see did not, for that reason, exist. No: in a world of which it has been said, "Thou hast ordered *all things* in *measure, number, and weight,*"[1] *there is no room for chance.* Strange may be the way in which the lot is cast into our lap; but whether it be cast by visible or invisible hands, whether suddenly or so slowly that we can see it come, whether at the side or from above or from below, whether plentifully or sparingly—it is always cast exactly *as the Lord wills.* So long as we are at school and belong to a class, where, in the noble science of arithmetic as in all other things, we can never advance beyond piecework, chance must always appear to us to play a large part in God's world; and when we are told that all things in it are ordered by measure, number, and weight, we may *believe* that it is so, but we are quite unable *to work the calculation.* Now there are, first of all, men of *foolish* minds, who have their hands so full of *work* that they can find no leisure to *count* or *measure,* and so they cannot but run foul of chance in every street of this great city of God.

> A fool believes not this, but says
> That everything by chance takes place;
> As all his life he never knows
> A reason for one thing he does.

And, moreover, as there are also men of *vain* minds who actually imagine that they have reached the extreme limit of all wit when they have got to the end of their *own,* it is no wonder that such *witlings* are every moment knocking their foot against chance, for they are better pleased that the wisdom which made the world should be considered defective, than that such a charge should be brought against theirs. Whoever is big with vanity will bring forth lies. But methinks it ought to delight the hearts of persons so very wise to be told that their knowledge is still imperfect; for does not that afford a ground of hope that when that which is perfect is come, there

[1] Wisdom of Solomon, xi. 20.

will be much that is new and beautiful for them to learn? How strange that it should be so hard to convince them that the *last day* will show measure and number and weight in much that appears mere casualty and peradventure, seeing that even here on earth time makes so many discoveries of the sort! To give an instance: It happened that two persons were once travelling along a highway, one of whom was a devotee of chance, and a powerful advocate of her cause. The other, who was a believer in the wisdom which "has ordered *all things* in measure, number, and weight," took occasion, as if unintentionally, to call the attention of his philosophic companion to the fact that the trees upon the right side of the road were much larger and stronger than those upon the left, and spoke of it as a manifest freak of chance. The philosopher at once assented, when, behold, it was observed that the road declined on the left, and so the trees there got less of the sun than those upon the right. How much less of chance would there be in the world if man had only fewer casual and narrow thoughts!

> Waste not thy pains to reach the ground;
> *When the snow melts* it will be found.

Even contingencies cannot be taken out of the hand of God and put into that of another, for we see how often the wisest plans miscarry; while a particle of dust falling from a wall, or a cloud passing before the sun, decides events of the greatest moment. It happened *by chance* that the priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan came down that way; but if the *Samaritan had not passed by*, a human life would have been lost. When Napoleon was returning from Egypt to France, Nelson was on the watch for him, and even lay for a while with his whole fleet close to the two ships of the fugitive. A thick fog, however, settled down between them; and had it not been for that fog, the state of the world would have been different from what it now is. In solemn grandeur the ancient avalanches lie couched on the icy mountain-tops, and repose from year to year, until, perhaps, the wing of a bird, as it flies quickly past,

touches them, and by their fall some thousands of human beings lose their lives. It is true that little touches do not make great revolutions, and that as little do trivial incidents hinder them. It is true that the avalanche must have been accumulating for many a year if it was to destroy the city; and that Napoleon must have been the man he was if the fog was to change the condition of the world. Still the touch of the bird's wing and the curtain of fog were likewise necessary to bring about the issue.

The men who decide the fate of the world are the readiest to acknowledge that what they call destiny or chance gives the turn to the scales. Napoleon often said of himself that no man could believe more firmly in *Providence* than he. But if it had been in Providence that he believed, he would have fallen upon his knees and presented to it the humble oblation of his gratitude. What he really believed in was destiny; and, therefore, to that blind power he offered *himself* as its favourite. Those men, however, who have weighty matters committed to their hands, and who are acquainted with the King of kings, all readily make the confession that, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain who build it: except the Lord keeps the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows, for He giveth it to His beloved, while asleep."[1]

If all things in the world are ordered in measure and number, no single one can be excepted; otherwise the whole will fall to pieces, or at least lose its harmony, just as happens in a well-constructed building. For this reason it is that sacred Scripture so often sets forth that adversity as well as prosperity, evil as well as good, are under the divine control. "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things."[2] "Shall there be evil in a city," exclaims another prophet, "and the Lord hath not done it?"[3] In like manner, in the New Testament, our Lord and His apostles, speaking of the blackest of crimes,

[1] Psalm cxxvii. 1, 2—Luther's vers. [2] Isa. xlv. 7. [3] Amos, iii. 6.

declare that *all* is done according to the council of God. For thus it is written: "Of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do *whatsoever Thy hand and Thy council determined before* to be done."[1] The predictions of the Old Testament prophets, and those of our Lord in the New, are a clear testimony that all things, the small and the great alike, are under the divine inspection. How shortsighted is man! Because he himself is unable to grasp the little with the great, he fancies that the same must be the case with the everlasting God. But would the Eternal be so great as He is, if by reason of His greatness He necessarily lost sight of the little? Could the world justly be called a *masterpiece of art* if the same artist whose hand is visible in the *vast* did not also show itself in the minute. I never see one of those ancient cathedrals—where even the lowest edge of the groundsel is elaborated in the same *spirit* and with the same affectionate pains as the tower which shoots aloft into the heavens—without perceiving in it a likeness to the work of the great Architect of the world. Here, too, it may be said—

> If imaged in the smallest part it be,
> You then the beauty of the whole will see.

No; *He must be great* in what is little as well as in what is large.

> The daisy on the mountain sod,
> Withdrawn from human view,
> Was planted by the hand of God,
> The hand that fashioned you.
>
> That flower His care protects whose call
> Did countless worlds create;
> By condescending to the small,
> He proves that he is great.

I will not, then, try to measure the Eternal by the standard of my own little eye; and although, amidst the conflict of the forces and beings in the world, *my* ear has not as yet been opened to

[1] Acts, iv. 27, 28.

catch that harmony in which they all join, I yet will not dispute that it exists. I figure to myself a deaf man suddenly, and for the first time, brought within sight of a great orchestra, and observing the busy movements of the hands and feet, and the sweat upon the faces of the musicians, and all for nothing, and I reflect how absurd it would appear to him. We men occupy the same position with respect to the universe. Oh, when I shall one day know Him even as I am known, and perceive through the vast creation the measure, number, and weight according to which all things are ordered, and how the least of them is connected and in concord with the greatest, what a blessed harmony it will be, and how it will regale my soul through all eternity!

Eternal God, in their majestic courses
Circle Thy suns through yon far realms of blue;
Myriads of stars, called from their unseen sources,
Thou scatterest o'er ether's plains like dew.

Yes, Thou art very great, and lowly I
Bend in the dust to think how great Thou art;
Yet, Lord, 'tis not Thy glorious majesty
That calms the throbbing of my anxious heart.

But that—while all the morning stars adore Thee,
And the angelic host Thy praises hymn—
While in their burning ranks arrayed before Thee,
Cast at Thy feet their crowns the Seraphim,—

Thou to the insects' song aloft ascending,
Thou to the prayer which humble hearts express,
A father's kind and pitying ear art lending—
This to my soul gives all its happiness.

II.

When Faith the heart to LOVE unseals,
Full many a flower its charm rebeals.

26.

The Lord is my Shepherd.

Myself I could not guide,
Helpless and blind;
And so to wiser hands
The charge resigned.

PSALM xxiii. 1. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

THESE words were uttered by David in the days of his youth, when he still kept the flock of his father Jesse, led them by the still waters and green pastures, and protected them with his staff. He then came to understand that what he was to his flock, that to him was his faithful God. How great a grace it is for a man no longer to stand alone in the world, but to know in whom he believes! For long I seemed to myself to be like a lost sheep, and knew not who should be my guide. Now, however, with the deepest consciousness of having found rest, I can say, "*The Lord is my Shepherd*," and what then is there that can do me harm? I have reached the haven, and no storm shall ever again drive my little bark into the open sea. Nay, even looking forward through all futurity, I take up the words of David and affirm, "*I shall not want.*" Oh, at how high a price would unbelievers be glad to purchase a confidence like this! Yes; could they but figure to themselves the deep inward calm of the soul which has found its rest in God, they would all become Christians!

Verse 2. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters."

I travelled along a broad highway, and so great was the dust and turmoil that my soul grew weary. Many a time did I look to the right hand and the left for some turn of the road, but I was hurried onward by the tumultuous crowd and could scarcely retain my self-possession. At length the heavenly Friend sought me amidst the crowd, led me out by secret ways from the throng, and brought me to a lone and verdant meadow, and to the banks of still waters. And oh it is good to be there! I have learned what is the blessedness of the soul when it rests in God, and thereby becomes calm. "Study to be quiet,"[1] saith the apostle; and the prophet affirms that "in quietness and confidence shall be your strength."[2] Yes; there is *strength* in this quietness in God,—this composure in which all the vital spirits are gathered in,—a strength of which he who hurries along the broad and dusty highway can form no conception. The pastures on which the soul is here regaled are ever green. The holy truths seem every day fresh to the mind, continually present new aspects, and always, in a variety of ways, become a food and a staff, a balm and a buckler in life. They retain perpetually their youth and verdure.

Verse 3. "He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake."

And wherefore does He exercise towards me a love and grace so great and manifold? It is not for *my own* sake, and on that account I rejoice. For were it otherwise, I would live in continual fear that my ingratitude and unprofitableness might exhaust His patience. It is for *His own name's sake* that He is so kind to me, and this gives my hope a firm support. His name, as He revealed it even to Moses, was "*The Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.*"[3] Is not that a beautiful name? Surely when He means to do honour to it, we may count upon much patience and long-suffering, and reckon that even great ingratitude and

[1] 1 Thess. iv. 11. [2] Isa. xxx. 15. [3] Exod. xxxiv. 6.

unfruitfulness on our side will not exhaust His mercy. The name, too, is not of *our* giving—it is one which *He* has revealed to us, and that surely should silence our doubts. I know now that He will never depart from me, even though I might be willing to forsake *Him;* and were I plunged ever so deep in the abyss I should still confidently exclaim, Lord, Thou canst not forsake me—*for Thy name's sake* Thou canst not forsake me. *My* life, when brought to a close, like that of millions more, will be a great and imperishable testimony that we have indeed a God who is merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.

Verse 4. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

The path even of those who have found the one good Shepherd often lies through a strait and rocky valley, where the overarching cliffs intercept the light of the sun and cast a cold shadow upon the traveller. But even in the gloom, even when bereft of the light of the sun, I am not afraid; I know that though *I* do not see it the sun is still above my head,—"*Thou art with me.*" Oh what mountains of anxiety this simple thought removes at once from the heart, and what tempests it disperses!

Thick darkness may enshroud me,
And bitter sorrow smart,
And pain and care and terror
Burn in my troubled heart;

But Thou art with me, Lord:
And that most firm belief,
Which none can take away,
Gives to my soul relief.

What is it that can reign as blessedness within the soul, and be to it bright sunshine while all is dark around? It is faith, and only the faith which "endures as seeing that which is invisible." Help me, gracious God, that the eyes of my soul

may, even through the thickest darkness, discern the faithful rod and staff that are wielded over me.

Verse 5. "Thou preparest a table before me in presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over."

Yes, only let God be mine, and let His presence refresh my soul, and I can be joyful in the face of all enemies. How a true and heartfelt sense of the nearness of God can often make us unspeakably calm and patient even when our adversaries are raging most fiercely around! Seasons like these are hours of tuition which God gives to man, and the lessons which we then learn are never forgotten in all our future life. We then feel so independent of the world and of all the creatures, and as if we stood loose from everything else and were solely in the hand of our God. Thus stood the Saviour before His judge when He answered him, "Thou couldst have no power at all against me except it were given thee from above."[1] According to the Psalmist's description, a man is then as if he were sitting at a well-furnished board, his head anointed with oil, and drinking cup after cup of the peace of God, while his enemies are toiling and raging around him. Or, as Luther says of himself, "That amidst their noise and tumult he, in the name of his God, sat still and sung his hymn." The world cannot understand such resignation of self into the divine hand, and is often exasperated by it; but sometimes also its hostility is thereby softened.

And how true likewise are the Psalmist's words with reference to *inward* adversaries! Even in our bosoms storms may rage, and yet in the face of all enemies the cup of consolation and joy is filled for us to the brim, and our head anointed with spiritual oil. This is the case when we can unfeignedly say, Notwithstanding I am still His child, He cannot forsake me,

[1] John, xix. 11.

for "before the foundation of the world He hath made me accepted in the Beloved."[1] Then takes place what the Psalmist describes when he says, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me Thy comforts delight my soul." There is a host of foes in the believer's breast, but there is also there a strong tower to which he can flee for refuge.

Verse 6. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

Yes, it is not for a few fleeting years that I have found Him. The decision I made was for all eternity when I consecrated to Him my heart. How should I depart from Him, seeing that every day confirms me in the assurance that in finding Him I have found the very life of my life? He, my generous Lord, has made me an *inmate of His house*—that great house which is built upon the foundation of prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone, and which reaches into eternity. Ought I to be insensible to the high honour which He has thereby conferred upon me? Ah me! was I not one of the cripples without upon the streets whom He sent His servants to seek and invite into His house and to His supper?[2] "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they will be still praising Thee. Selah."[3] Such was the song of the Psalmist; and now that my soul has found a resting-place in the Church, that living temple of my God, I too repeat the strain. It is good to dwell in His house, good to be permitted to dwell even in the remotest corner of

[1] Eph. i. 4-6. [2] Luke, xiv. 21. [3] Psalm lxxxiv. 1-4.

it; I know that I have not deserved a place of honour, and oh how good it is to know likewise that He will never cast me out, if I do not go of my own accord! but, grateful to Him, I will gladly dwell in it from eternity to eternity.

Beneath Thy gentle care, O Shepherd dear,
My soul a rest has found that ne'er shall cease;
E'en to the grave Thy staff will guard me here,
And guide me to my Father's house in peace.

I strayed a wild tumultuous road along,
My mind not less tumultuous than the way:
Thou didst me seek, and from the bustling throng
By paths unseen to this lone mead convey.

O blest retreat! the blue deep overhead
With longings strange and sweet the bosom fills,
While, wafting fragrance through the flowery glade,
A vernal air the bosom's longing stills.

Rich is the banquet both for heart and eye,
As, varying still their hues by night and day,
A world of flowers, like sparkling jewelry,
Their opening loveliness around display.

When shines the sun aloft without a cloud,
His smile evokes a pomp of colours bright!
Or if in gloom his radiant face he shroud,
Sweet violets shed their perfume through the night.

How dear to me the calm, so deep and still,
After the din and tumult of the past!
I feel that undivided now my will
Shall rest in Thine, O Shepherd dear, at last.

27.

The Vinedresser purgeth the Vine.

Why art thou, friend, so much surprised?
Sure, 'tis no strange event,
If, born again the child of Christ,
Thou shouldst to SCHOOL *be sent:*
At school a child is tutored best,
As all the world allow;
And schools in which the ROD *is missed*
Are furnished ill, I trow.

JOHN, XV. 1, 2. "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, He taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

WHILE yet without a Saviour, I was like a wild flower in the open field, or a tree in the desert, which has none to bind its boughs when broken by the storm—none to moisten its roots in the time of drought—a poor forsaken plant, exposed as a prey to the storms of heaven and to the cattle that roam the plain. Now, however, He has in love and faithfulness transplanted me from the field into His garden, fulfilling the promise, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will *plant them in this land, assuredly with my whole heart* and with my whole soul."[1] Oh how skilful a Gardener, who has converted useless weeds into trees of righteousness and pleasant plants! Now that at last I grow in so good a soil, and am trained by so wise a hand, I know for certain that storm and tempest, rain and sunshine, will all be for my good!

[1] Jer. xxxii. 40, 41.

When I look around upon the flowers and plants of the garden, that which first strikes my eye is their great variety; and yet, various though they be, they all bear a distinguishing mark by which they are known. We see upon them the sign of the *Cross.* But for this it might be supposed of many that they did not belong to the place, so strange and diverse are they both in perfume and colour.

> O best of Gardeners, beyond all compare,
> Thy flowers Thou trainest with so faithful care;
> Many there are of various kinds and hue,
> *Yet each receives the special culture due.*

This is what next excites my wonder: Plants of different kinds *require* different modes of cultivation. One needs to have the rain in spring, another in summer; this the morning and that the noontide sun; some must be supported with stakes, and some can stand alone; and in many other respects they differ; and yet, in the garden of the Lord, not a single plant but receives its own peculiar culture. How manifold are the methods by which at first He brings us into His garden; and afterwards, when we have taken root, with what singular skill and care He treats us! It is this that gives the marvel and the charm to the assemblies of the children of God. They are all in one room, and yet each has entered it by a different door. They all stand before the throne and see His face, and yet each sees it on a different side. Even of the Church upon earth we may say that in the Father's house there are *many mansions;* and if so, never ought the right of any member to his place to be called in question, whatever may be his colour, provided only that he bears the imprint of the Cross. Like anemones which are of different hues, white, red, and blue, but which all in common show a black spot, the flowers in the garden of Jesus are variously tinted and streaked, but all show the mark of that bloody Bridegroom who loved them even unto death, and has signed them with His Cross. If *a man be in the land of promise,* Christians ought never to inquire

whether he found his way to it across the Isthmus or through the Red Sea.

Full many flowers, in my Lord's garden blooming,
Their loveliness display;
Of varied shape, hue, kind, the air perfuming,
They stand in bright array.

How with their beauty is the eye delighted,
That loves God's hand to trace!
How glows in all, by skill divine ignited,
Some sweet peculiar grace!

There grows *simplicity*, here *faith*, and holy
Wisdom and *patience* there
Beside the cross, with *truth* and *meekness* lowly,
And beauty everywhere.

This wrought the *one* same Spirit, and He did it
As to Himself seemed meet;
And when each flower shall in its place be fitted,
The wreath will be *complete*.

To the work of the *planter* belongs that also of *weeding*, pruning off the dry shoots and branches, and digging about the roots; all of which the heavenly Husbandman patiently performs. We are told in this parable that He *purgeth* the fruitful branch that it may bring forth *more* fruit; and it is said of the barren fig-tree, elsewhere, that He let it alone for a year, and allowed the dresser of the vineyard to dig about it and dung it, if perchance it might then become fruitful. A *regenerate* man is not for that reason already a sanctified one. The new birth is nothing else than for the person who was as a wild tree in the field, to be transplanted by *faith* and *love* into the garden of Jesus, and there to obtain better soil, a milder atmosphere, and a more careful culture. The regenerate Christian is like a babe which has been born into a new and beautiful world, but in which it has still to grow and *ripen* unto *manhood:* and this it cannot fail to do, now that it breathes so pure an air, has so gentle a heaven above, pleasant fruits on which to feast within its reach, and a faithful motherly love continually at its side. We ought not, then, to be surprised when we find that even the regenerate child of man

resembles less a garden with only beautiful flowers than a garden *with many a weed;* or rather that he is a vine which needs to have its *rank shoots* pruned off. It is with him who has been born again as is often to be seen in Alpine regions at the rising of the sun: around the peak and lofty crest of the mountains, a beautiful warm light settles down; while in the valleys beneath, snow-wreaths and chilly shadows lie, and lie so long. Alas! how long do such wreaths and shadows also lie in the *depths* of even a regenerate heart! Especially how deep a seat do certain bosom sins acquire, which, although they seem only something isolated—such, perchance, as impatience, self-will, want of order and punctuality, vanity—still, if permitted to *grow unchecked*, threaten *extinction* to the infant life of the new man! The whole strength of the vine may run into two or three shoots, and make it unfruitful. A godly man has made the remark, that by *deliberately* yielding to even one fault we subvert the whole fabric of Christianity, and that to do so is as when a master suffers a single rafter of his house to fall into decay. Now this is a matter in respect of which many Christians are under a delusion. We are less clear-sighted to our own darling sins than others are, who yet dare not tell them to us. And so, many live on from day to day, the rafter all the while becoming more and more frail. The thought of this will sometimes suggest itself, and conscience begin gently to knock. But how quickly do a host of excuses, like the officious menials of some despotic lord, present themselves and exclaim, "Who knocks there? Silence!" and all is quiet again. There is no task so hard as for a man to *take arms against himself.* Beware then of *excuses.* They perform the part of sponsors at the baptisms of the devil.

> Far-fetched pretexts and reasonings,
> Are fickle and deceptive things:
> Give to Thy soul's monition heed—
> Who *spares himself* will not succeed.

Now, because he knows how hard it is for a man to use violence against himself, the heavenly Husbandman is pleased,

in His goodness, to do it *in our stead.* Sometimes He lops off the shoots from His vine, sometimes digs around His fig-tree, and sometimes transplants His flowers into another bed: and as the weak eye often does not know the rank shoots and weeds to be what they are, it is equally blind to the means He sees fit to employ for their extirpation. It may be quite a secret and inconsiderable cross, and yet it may work great effects upon the character. A slight which has been experienced, the failure of some petty enjoyment, a broken sleep, a misunderstanding with a friend, all these are things which, in the hand of the Gardener, may be used as instruments to eradicate the weeds. Never then, O reader, open thy mouth against the Sovereign Disposer of all events, either on account of the *great* or the *little* crosses of thy life. Know that *all* is well ordered, and expressly calculated to heal *thy* infirmity. Wilt thou not so far put trust in Him? Remember *thine* eye and *thine* understanding are no match for *His.*

Unerring is His skill,
 Who undertakes Thy cure;
Though sharp the pain, be still,
 And patiently endure;
It matters not what *instrument* he wield,
If thou be *healed.*

28.

He hath filled me with Bitterness.

Because thou art alone when sorrow lowers,
 Thy spirit faints with doubt and fear.
Seek'st thou companions in thy gloomy hours?
 Thou hast that comfort near.
Of man's deep wretchedness and woe,
None like the holy PROPHETS *know.*

LAM. iii. 15-39. "He hath filled me with bitterness, He hath made me drunken with wormwood. He hath also

broken my teeth with gravel stones, He hath covered me with ashes. And Thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgat prosperity. And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord: remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him. The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him. He putteth his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope. He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him: he is filled full with reproach. For the Lord will not cast off for ever: but though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. To crush under His feet all the prisoners of the earth, to turn aside the right of a man before the face of the Most High, to subvert a man in his cause, the Lord approveth not. Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not? Out of the mouth of the Most High proceedeth not evil and good? Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?"

WHAT are all the heartbreaks and tribulation of which any of us have to complain, compared with what the witnesses for God in the olden times endured? The Lord bids us "rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great," He says, "is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets

which were before you;"[1] and He thereby directs our attention to the fact that as we are not the first, so neither also shall we be the last whose appointed lot it is to eat the bread of sorrow, whether in the Lord's cause or on some other account. As in the ark of the covenant, so upon His table the *rod* and the *manna* are placed side by side.[2] In this view it is likewise consolatory to read in the Old Testament the histories of those worthies whom the Epistle to the Hebrews calls the cloud of witnesses, and in the 11th chapter mentions by name.

But above the rest, I have always found that my faith was greatly strengthened by reading the prophet *Jeremiah.* Truly he was a man of tears. Can any one hear without being deeply moved, when, for instance, at the commencement of the 9th chapter, he exclaims, "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people"? or when, in his Book of Lamentations, he bewails his lot in the passage cited as the text, and in a subsequent verse cries out, "Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people: mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not without any intermission, till the Lord look down and behold from heaven"? Think of the great personal sufferings, the unmeasured derision, the blows, the cruel imprisonment, and all but a death by hunger, which he endured for the testimony he bore to the truth.[3] But little did he account of his own calamities when compared with those of his people. Yes, this prophet is the right master to teach us the duty of looking on the affliction of others as if it were our own.

These Lamentations were written at the time when King Zedekiah, with his eyes put out and his limbs bound with fetters of brass, was dragged off to Babylon—when Jerusalem and the Temple were burned, the wall of the city laid level with the ground, and the whole population of the land, save some of the poorest class, carried away into captivity. It was then that the prophet took his seat upon the ruins of the city

[1] Matt. v. 12. [2] Heb. ix. 4. [3] Jer. xx. 37, 38.

which had once been "great among the nations, and a princess among the provinces."[1] He had tarried behind with the poor remnant of the people; but even from them he reaped only mockery and insult, and at length was obliged to accompany them on their flight to Egypt, although assuring them at the time that the strong arm of Nebuchadnezzar would reach them even there. "I was a derision," he says, "to all my people, and their song all the day."[2] We see from this that even strong-minded men like the prophets knew the bitterness and temptation of despair no less than we, the weakly children of an effeminate age. And surely in the fellowship of their tears there is strong consolation. O heaven! is it possible that a man like Jeremiah could cry out: "Ever since I spake, and cried, and preached of violence and spoil, the word of the Lord has been made a reproach unto me, and a derision daily. Then I said, *I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name: but His word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay"?* Is it possible that such a man of faith could curse, like Job, the day of his birth, and say, "Would that He had slain me from the womb, or that my mother might have been my grave"?[3]

I always supposed that seasons in which the tempter thus fiercely assails the soul were a secret of my own history, and here I plainly read that such seasons were known even to God's holiest servants. And, doubtless, there are many of whom we least suspect it, and who yet are wading in the deep waters up to the throat. Blessed, therefore, be God for the comfort that I can extract from their lamentations. I now know with greater certainty than I ever hoped for, that even when we feel the bitter pain of temptation, and when Satan seems to be on the point of laying hands upon our souls, the mercy of the Lord does not fail. The Psalmist says it is new unto us every morning. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."[4]

[1] Lam. i. 1. [2] Lam. iii. 14. [3] Jer. xx. 9, 17. [4] Psalm xxx. 5.

Yes, even in the darkest nights of tribulation an inward voice whispers that His compassion will reappear with the *dawn.* "Thou wilt remember these things," he here says, "*for my soul telleth me.*"[1] Yes, my soul telleth me "that He doth not afflict *willingly*, nor grieve the children of men." And if He do it unwillingly, the correction, when it has accomplished its purpose, will come to an *end.* "Though He cause grief," saith the prophet, "yet will He have compassion, according to the multitude of His mercies." And again, "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." Such are the words of this man of tears—of him who had preached for half a century, and continually earned for his pains only fresh contradiction and ingratitude; and, being his, they are words of *experience*, on which we can safely *build.* I too, therefore, will "put my mouth in the dust, if so there may be hope."

Wait patiently the happy *hour*
Ordained for thy relief,
For come it surely will with power,
And change to joy thy grief.
Nay, more, to put to shame thy fear,
When looked for least it will appear.

All that the prophet suffered, he suffered from his fellow-men; and when the Lord puts into human hands the rod of our chastisement, the chastisement is always worse to bear than when He keeps it in His own. And for this many reasons may be assigned. One is that when it is *man* who brings his brother into the furnace, it is less easy to think, according to the words of David, that "the Lord hath bidden him." In such cases, likewise, more than in others, the old Adam resists more stoutly, and therefore it is necessary always to bear in mind with Jeremiah, "*Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?*" How precious a text this is! It teaches us, in the first place, that all misfortunes, however insidious may be their attacks, are mere agents and

[1] Lam. iii. 20—Luther's vers.

messengers of the Lord, compelled to subserve the execution of His purposes of love; and as Luther says, "Well does the Lord know how to make one knave apply the rod to the back of another." What room, then, is there for hatred or malice in the breast of a Christian who looks upon even bitter enemies as messengers sent to him from *God* with a menace or a blow? In the second place, it instructs us to turn our eye away from the thoughts and intentions of all adversaries, and direct it to the thoughts of love cherished towards us by the Lord, according as David sings: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; my cup runneth over." While they rage and storm, I am of good cheer, and say,—

> Full well I know that God's intent
> St Peter's self cannot prevent.

Oh what a world of vexation are they spared who, under every cross which they suffer from the hands of men, think more of what the *Lord* than of what *men* intend to do!

> Ye foes of mine, why take such pains to wound me and annoy?
> What are ye all but officers in our great God's employ?
> Bitter, indeed, would be my grief, unless full well I knew
> That God the *surgeon* is, and His mere *instruments* are *you*.
> O happy he who sees the threads of all that's said and done
> By man on earth meet in the hand of the Almighty One!

It would appear, then, that for man here upon earth the only misfortune is *sin*. Tell me, dear reader, what would it matter though sickness and poverty, the mockery and contempt of adversaries, and even death itself, were to assail thee, if thy heart were armed with *the faith and patience of the saints*, and if thou hadst learned *quietly to wait*, and trustfully and hopefully to humble thyself under the mighty hand of God? What is it but *sin* that blackens affliction, or what is a misfortune to any man unless he regard it as such? Is not our bearing towards affliction that which makes it affliction at all? "Wherefore doth a living man complain?" *Let him complain of his sin*. Thou art poor, my brother, but why murmur at

thy poverty, and not rather at thy discontented heart, which can never have enough? Thy talents are few and small, but why wilt thou murmur at that, and not much more at the devil of pride, which cannot brook being numbered among those who are not "noble after the flesh"? Thine enemies sorely vex thee, but why murmur against them, and not rather against thine own unbelieving heart, which will not be persuaded that they can do nothing to thee but what the Lord bids them? In short, among all the calamities of earth, only one is real, and that is *sin.*

O Holy Spirit of the Lord, teach me the fear of *sin.* Thy will is that all Thy children should fear it more than *suffering.* When, however, I inquire at my inmost heart which of the two I dread the most, I find that I incline to be exempt from the assaults of affliction more than from the wiles of sin; and, O Lord, so long as this is the case, I am not wholly Thine. Spirit of might! subdue the infirmity of my flesh; arm me with the strength which enabled the prophets of old to stand fast even when the floods overwhelmed their souls. O God, Thou art very rich—even now as rich as Thou wert in those days. All the many millions to whose penury Thou hast since been ministering with gift upon gift have not exhausted Thy treasures; and well I know that if I supplicate Thee in earnest, Thou wilt not send me away empty.

29.

Count it Joy when ye fall into Temptations.

Thou didst taste the cross,
And find it bitter. Next time ponder well;
Perhaps 'twas not the KERNEL, *but the* SHELL.

JAMES, i. 1, 2. "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered

abroad, greeting. My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations."

HOW profitable it is to read the words of one who was connected by birth with the Lord of glory, and who afterwards became His spiritual brother and servant! Not until after long resistance were James and John brought to acknowledge in Him who was brother to them after the flesh, their Lord and Master after the Spirit. Now, however, James can find for himself no nobler title than "servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." The "greeting" means in the original, "*Be of good cheer!*" and was the customary form of salutation among the members of the infant Church. We find them using it towards each other under all circumstances, not even excepting *temptations;* for the apostle here says, that when they fell into divers temptations, they were to count it *all joy.* Have I advanced so far? True it is—and it is to Thee, O Grace Eternal! that I am indebted for it—that I can often, in the midst of temptation, exult in the prospect of the time when "they that sow in tears shall reap in joy." And who has ever been able, in some blissful moments when the veil of the sanctuary was withdrawn, to catch a glimpse of the *crown of life* "which the Lord has promised to them that love Him," without exulting?

How rich and full the banquet is,
When to the soul is given
To draw the curtain that divides
This *lower world* from *heaven!*

Then in the bosom all is calm,
No cares or passions move;
While drops of the eternal light
Fall gently from above.

But to do what the apostle here requires—viz., to praise the Lord *for the temptation itself*—alas! that is very hard. The medicine is still bitter to the taste, although we may know that it is the only effectual cure. To Thee, therefore, O crucified

Love, who didst willingly undergo so bitter sufferings on my account, I address my prayer, that Thou wouldst help me to overcome the antipathy to the cross which is so deeply seated in my flesh. At the same time I also know, that having Thyself, in the days of Thy flesh, prayed that the cup might pass from Thee, Thou wilt be to me a merciful High Priest, and have compassion on my infirmity. In the garden of Paradise, when man was in innocence, there grew no thorns to wound, and no wood of which to make a cross. These were prepared for him only when he had fallen; and oh,

> Blame not the tears of those who pant to be
> Quit of the cross and all earth's misery.

Verses 3, 4. "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

In truth, from no scrutiny of the heart, however deep it may go, can we ascertain that we do believe. It is only *trial* that can teach us this. In the parable of the sower we are told that not "till the sun was up"[1] was it discovered that the seed had no root; and it is even so with faith. No man can know whether that noble plant has struck its roots in the better world, until the sun of tribulation has risen and shot down its scorching rays upon his head. Patience must have had her perfect work, must have endured *unto the end*, before all the fair virtues, which James calls fruits of the wisdom from above, can appear in the Christian's character, making him "pure, peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."[2] I find in all Christians who have passed through much tribulation a certain quality of *ripeness*, which I am of opinion can be acquired in no other school. Just as a certain degree of solar heat is necessary to bring the finest sorts of fruit to perfection, so is the fiery trial[3] indispensable for ripening the

[1] Matt. xiii. 6. [2] James, iii. 17. [3] 1 Pet. iv. 12.

inner man. Claudius calls the Christian who has been subjected to it "the man with the *moonbeam* on his face." It is night that gives their brilliancy to the stars; and, in like manner, the night of adversity spreads over the countenance of the Christian who has endured it a strange cast, which bespeaks itself to be of the other world and enforces reverence. All this I well know, and there are times when the little cross upon my shoulder really does appear as if it were a *wing* given me by God to help me to soar aloft. But in other hours, when faith fails, it also seems to me as a heavy *weight* that bends me still nearer to the earth. Oh that on such occasions I could but rivet my eye upon the *experience* which Thou, O Heavenly Wisdom, hast enabled me to gather from the past; for when didst Thou ever present me with a bitter fruit which was not at least sweet at the core? When didst Thou ever lead me into the wilderness without showing me a treasure there? No, Lord, I must bear testimony that that Thou hast never done. And am I not then a weak and foolish child when I still distrust Thee?

> Oh let the noble thought my heart elate,
> That all things ripen towards a perfect state,
> And that to quarrel with Heaven's high decree
> Is but to aggravate our misery.
> Come, teach me *resignation;* though the worst
> To learn of all man's duties, 'tis the first.

Verse 5. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men with simplicity,[1] and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

No doubt even tribulation, *in and of itself*, makes no man wise and good. He is not a Christian who merely wears the thorny crown. We must, on our own part, wisely improve tribulation, if by its means we are to acquire wisdom and advance to ripeness. To this end we need to pray to God for correct insight and a right deportment. And how unspeak-

[1] Luther's vers.

ably sweet is the inducement to prayer which the apostle here holds out! We men, when we give, rarely do it with simplicity; we reflect too much in place of asking the single question, Can I in truth, with this boon of mine, mitigate a sorrow or wipe away a tear? But oh, what a thought! *My God giveth with simplicity.* All that He looks for on my part is sincerity of desire; and if He find it, His heart and hand are opened wide. *He upbraideth not.* Repeat your visits too frequently to earthly benefactors, and though they be the best of men, they will upbraid you. Not so my God. To Him *all* may go, and all *as often as they please, for He is rich unto all that call upon Him.*[1] What an encouragement to us to appear frequently as suppliants at His throne! The candle does not emit a feebler ray for all the many tapers that are kindled at its flame; and it is even so with the wealth of our God. All the creatures whom He has called into existence stand as beggars around His throne, and depart only to return; and yet His hand of grace is never weary with giving.

Verses 6, 7, 8. "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways."

This passage has made many a reader afraid. I myself remember the time when I did not venture to pray, because methought I wavered. And yet I became aware that wavering makes a man unhappy; that when he does not surely know what he believes, he knows as little what he does, and becomes unstable in all his ways. It is only a steadfast faith that can give steadfastness to the walk. Is it not clear, however, that he who sincerely desires to believe is already a believer? He who would *fain* believe that the little flag descried on the distant horizon may prove a bark hastening to rescue him from

[1] Rom. x. 12.

the waves with which he struggles, begins *to hope.* And what is *hope* but faith looking to the *good things to come?* There are persons of whom the Apostle Paul speaks as being apprehended *of Christ* before Christ has been apprehended of *them.* And such is the case of the man who wishes to believe, but finds that he cannot. Faith has apprehended him ere he is conscious of it, or has on his part apprehended faith. Augustus Herman Franke once, at a time when his faith wavered, uttered the prayer, "O God, *if a God there be,* manifest Thyself to me." Surely we may say, that unless God had apprehended him, the holy man could never have prayed in such terms. Now that I am aware of this, I boldly persevere in prayer, even when my faith is weak. On these occasions the prayer I offer is that of the suppliant father, "*Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.*"[1] How beautiful a prayer, and how far it carries us on! In praying it, I have learned that "*whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.*" He who *ventures* anything into the hands of God *gains* a prize, and one commensurate with his stake. Of all lotteries this is the best.

O Lord, well do I know that the trials Thou appointest are a boon of Thy grace; provided only that on our part there be no lack of faith. Be it mine, therefore, patiently to endure, however hotly the sun of tribulation may shine. I know that it will serve to *ripen* my faith. Vouchsafe to me wisdom so to improve affliction, as that the ends for which it is allotted to me may be answered. Despise not the oblation, though all the faith I can present is but as a grain of mustard-seed. On the surface of my soul the billows may often roll to and fro, but within there is a calm. Deep in the core of my being I cleave unto Thee. Wholly to belong to Thee, whether that end be reached by the way of suffering or enjoyment, is the inmost passion of my heart. "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief."

[1] Mark, ix. 24.

30.

I earnestly remember my Son.

Too heavy are the strokes of God,
I hear thee, friend, complain,
As if He loved to use the rod,
And did not heed thy pain.

Ah no! He feels of every blow
As well as thou the smart;
And wouldst thou but thy sins forego,
He with the rod would part.

JER. xxxi. 15-20. "Thus saith the Lord, A voice was heard in Ramah,[1] lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. Thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work[2] shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border. I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn Thou me, and I shall be turned; for Thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh:[3] I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is (not) Ephraim my dear son? is he (not) a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."

[1] The Jews passed through Ramah when led captive to Babylon.—Jer. xl. 1.

[2] Trouble.

[3] Sign of mourning.—Ezek. xxi. 12.

RACHEL, the great representative mother of the race of Israel, mourned and wept when her children were being led away captive to Babylon; but simultaneously with the voice of her weeping, the prophetic word of consolation is heard announcing that when the Lord should have accomplished the purposes of His heart towards His people, their affliction should cease, and their work be fully rewarded.

When a man has learned to recognise the image of himself in Israel, that nation with the iron neck and brazen brow, how do the narratives of the Old Testament become rousing calls and mighty hammer-strokes to his obdurate heart! There is a fiery severity in the God who of old, whenever His people waxed proud, led them forth into the wilderness; and that fiery severity we too ought to feel when He leads us into the wilderness now. I find that a sense of it helps greatly to alleviate every tribulation. We become aware that God is concerned about us, and that itself is tasting that He is near; for there is a vast difference between merely feeling the smart of the scourge upon our back and seeing besides the human, or rather the divine, *hand* that wields it. He has not given me up, is the thought that first suggests itself to my mind, when I begin to be sensible of the zeal of my God, breathed forth from my tribulation. I then exclaim with the prophet, "Lord of Hosts, great in counsel and mighty in work, Thine eyes are open on all the ways of the sons of men, to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."[1] It is sweet to read that "the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry."[2] But it is sweet also to read, "I will set my eyes upon them for evil, and not for good."[3] Yes, even in that there is consolation in the end; for if by the rigour of His chastisements God does not forsake the ungodly man, though the ungodly man may forsake Him, there is love involved in His justice. How beautifully this is expressed even in that passage of the Old Testament Scriptures where, by the mouth of Moses, the

[1] Jer. xxxii. 19. [2] Psalm xxxiv. 15. [3] Amos, ix. 4.

Lord upbraids Israel, reminding her how he had humbled her for forty years in the wilderness, and proved her, in order to know "what was in her heart." We read, "Thou shalt also consider in thine heart *that as a man chasteneth his son, so also shall the Lord my God chasten thee.*"[1] And no less beautifully does the Lord express it in the passage before us: "Is (not) Ephraim my dear son? is he (not) a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."

Yes, thou God of Love, Thy wayward son is still dear to Thee, is still Thy pleasant child. What, then, although Thou chasten him? we still can see how truly it is written of Thee that the Lord doth not afflict *willingly*, nor grieve the children of men.[2] Still may he who recognises *the intention of Thy penalties* aver,—

> Love is Thy nature's essence, and the source
> From which alone flows Thy severity.

Yes, well may *Thy children* so say; for if it be with sorrow of heart that Thou correctest them, the blows Thou inflictest fall upon *Thyself*, and *our* wounds are also *Thine*. Oh then, how wondrously the magnitude of Thy love is manifested to us in Thy severest strokes!

Yes, in the very rigour with which Thou visitest, in order to reclaim, the sinner, there is love concealed; and no sooner does the soul learn to taste that love than Thy corrections appear wondrously sweet and good. Yes, dear reader, even the chastisements of the Lord may become manna to thee, and make thee say—

> I do not see the rod,
> Only the hand I see
> Which so much care bestowed
> On wayward child like me.
>
> The rod is bitter food;
> But passing sweet the love
> Which wisely wields it for my good
> When I rebellious prove.

[1] Deut. viii. 5. [2] Lam. iii. 33.

The Saviour says, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me." *To suffer* the will of God is likewise a meat on which, under affliction, our inner man may feed from day to day. Yes, my soul, mark well the word—it is meat to suffer the will of God. If, then, with enfeebled limbs thou be stretched upon a sick-bed, or, with fetters on thy hand, immured in a prison—if men have pushed thee aside so that thou canst not *do*, as thou wouldst wish, the will of God, by advancing His kingdom, see here a task which thou hast still power to execute for His sake: thou canst *suffer* His will, and suffer it patiently, so as to find in it a *meat* for thy inner man. The love-born zeal of thy God is the hidden manna of affliction; but neither dost Thou on Thy part, O my God and Father, afflict Thy human offspring *willingly;* and it is because Thou wouldst rather bless than buffet them that Thou chastenest them in measure.

Love, mercy, patience to display,
And pardon sinners day by day;
To help the weak, the sick to tend,
And great and small alike befriend,
Is Thy delight.

That is the reason why Thou correctest with measure and refrainest to smite, the moment Thy son Ephraim has come to a right mind and blushed and repented. "The Lord killeth and maketh alive; He bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up."[1] How well also does the history of Thy people teach this consolatory lesson: "I will allure her," Thou sayest, "and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her."[2] Here, then, we learn that it is not to *destroy* that Thou bringest us into the wilderness, but to *speak comfortably* to our hearts. In the day of our prosperity, when we are enjoying the pleasures of life, the tumult about us is so great that we cannot hear Thy voice; whereas every affliction is a wilderness, in which solitude and silence reign, so that we can better understand what Thou sayest, according as it is written, "Affliction teacheth us to give heed to Thy word."[3] In every

[1] 1 Sam. ii. 6. [2] Hos. ii. 14. [3] Isa. xxviii. 19—Luther's vers.

case it is, as it were, a night to the soul. Noisy is the day, and we then hear only the voices of men; but silence comes with darkness, and when the human voices cease, the voice of God begins to speak.

Never, then, thou faithful God and Shepherd, never will I refuse, when Thou seest fit to lead me away from the green pastures into the lonesome wilderness, there to hold sacred converse with my soul. I know that I have still a place in Thy heart, according to Thine own word: "Though I spoke against my son Ephraim, *I do earnestly remember him still.*" I know that Thy son Ephraim, even when Thou art obliged to send him captive to Babylon, still continues to be to Thee a dear son and a pleasant child; and hence, though I may bemoan myself when thou chastenest me, I do not yield to despair. For me, too, the hour shall come when it shall be said, "Refrain thy voice from weeping and thine eyes from tears, for thy work shall be rewarded." Thou art still the God of Thy people as Thou wert of old. The promise to turn again their captivity, if they would but repent, which Thou madest to ancient Israel, Thy people after the flesh, Thou wilt not break to Thine Israel after the spirit. No; all the revelations of Thy severity as of Thy loving-kindness, which Thou didst once vouchsafe in the congregation of Thine ancient people, will be made in still greater plenitude and glory in the midst of Thine elect of the New Testament. Behold, O Lord, my heart has been opened unto Thee, and in Thee my soul rejoices in the midst of its tribulation.

With heart and tongue attuned, to Thee
O Lord, a grateful song I'll raise,
Because inviolate to me,
Thou keep'st the covenant of Thy grace.

And when from duty's path declined,
And lost on sin's bleak waste I roam,
Thou, the Good Shepherd, dost me find,
And to the fold conduct me home.

Or if in shame and misery
I reap of my self-will the fruit,
Thou dost me pity, and stand by
With look displeased, but still and mute;

Until, with many a bitter tear,
My folly I bewail, and then
In my dark soul, its gloom to cheer,
Thou shedd'st Thy heavenly light again.

31.

Before I was afflicted I went astray.

Full many a devil from the heart
The rod of Christ must drive,
Ere rooted, and in every part
Well PRUNED, *the* VINE *will thrive.*

Yet doubtless upon none of all
The brood that in me hide
Its strokes so oft and heavy fall
As on the DEVIL OF PRIDE.

PSALM cxix. 67. "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept Thy word."

DAN. iv. 37. "I praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase."

NOTHING creeps so easily into the heart of a man after conversion as pride. No doubt a heart which Christ has once beautified with His graces, will never admit this devil if he continue as ill-mannered as before. In a house so tastefully decorated he must appear genteelly, and be upon his good behaviour. No longer must pride take up with such paltry things as money or lands. It was not by pride like that that Satan fell. For this reason, the devil of which we speak now clothes himself in white and affects spiritual things. The

man aspires to eminence in the kingdom of God, and claims consideration on account of his gifts and experiences: regarding himself as a light of no common brightness, he desiderates a lofty candlestick from which to emit his rays. It is as a queen that Pride stalks forth, and therefore she brings with her a suite of courtiers. If into the heart of which Christ dispossessed her at conversion she be again allowed to enter, we may certainly expect His word to take effect, and that the unclean spirit which was cast out, on finding the house swept and garnished, will return and bring with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, so that the last state of that man will be worse than the first.[1] Only make room for pride, and gradually will *envy*, *selfishness*, *malice*, *and discontent* steal in along with it; for, as Sirach says, "*Pride is the beginning of sin, and he that hath it shall pour out abomination.*"[2] The cause of so miserable an infatuation is this, that when converted we really in some points are better than other men. For instance, we may perhaps have become more indifferent to the good things of the world; but distance from the earth is not necessarily proximity to the sun. Besides, it is easy to delude one's self into the supposition that to be much *occupied* with spiritual things is *to be* spiritually minded, and that because our *thoughts* often soar on high, our *conversation* also is in heaven. The usual consequence is, that we indulge in pride towards the children of the world. Their good qualities are overlooked and the word of the Saviour is forgotten, "Is thine eye evil because I am good?"[3] The eye which had far better be turned inwards is turned outwards, and more and more takes that direction.

This kind of pride, when it regains the dominion of a Christian's heart, scarcely ever fails to enter into fellowship with *antipathy* to the Cross. But ill does it fare with the soul when it begins afresh to take offence at that which is the sacred symbol of the kingdom of God; and in an evil case is the Christian who forgets the many fair and fragrant flowers which

[1] Matt. xii. 43. [2] Ecclus. x. 13. [3] Matt. xx. 15.

spring and blossom around the *Cross*, and nowhere else. He then takes umbrage, if he be made so much as to feel the rod of the heavenly Father, though St Peter exhorts, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you."[1] He will have *miracles wrought* rather than that he should receive one of those bloody marks which yet all the saints of God have borne. Poor man! If the Saviour whom thou lovest, and who is the Son of God, wore a crown of thorns, what right hast thou to adorn thy head with a chaplet of roses?

Of all the suckers on His vine there are none which the heavenly Husbandman endeavours with so intent an aim to prune away as those of pride, for He knows that into them the whole strength of the stock is most apt to run, wasting the generous sap, and thereby marring the goodly fruit. And hence the more the wilful heart rebels under the first little cross, and attempts to shake it off, the sooner does the Lord impose a *second* and then a *third*, until the lesson of submission has been learned. Under this discipline we are at first very blind, and cannot conceive what it means; nay, we may be so bold as, like Job, to expostulate with God and say, "Do not condemn me; show me wherefore Thou contendest with me."[2] Think not, however, that the heavenly Husbandman will falter in His purpose. Oh no! Well did He know by what means to constrain a Job, who had been unreasonably zealous to confess, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."[3] And no less to abase a Nebuchadnezzar who had insulted Him and said, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, and for the honour of my majesty?"—forcing him to bless the Most High, and to praise and honour Him that liveth for ever. But do not for that reason give way to apprehension, or think that He will now frown upon thee in His anger. No, dear reader—after having thoroughly buffeted a man, how gracious He becomes, and how liberally does He pour forth His gifts!

[1] 1 Peter, iv. 12. [2] Job, x. 2. [3] Job, xlii. 6.

It is a beautiful rule which a pious servant of God has given us in the following words :—

"If sickness, want, or dire mischance
Are down upon thee poured,
Fall on thy knees, and ask at once,
What means Thy message, Lord?

And if, my child, thou humbly take
His answer to thy heart,
Be sure that He will quickly make
Thy troubles all depart."

If the soul in such a case inquires uprightly, it will not tarry long for an answer. An answer is generally given, and comes in clear and intelligible terms. And what is its drift? In nine cases out of ten it is at some devil of pride which has crept into the heart that the rod of God has been aimed.

I can say with truth that many a sick-bed has been to me as a diet of worship, and many a sick-chamber as a holy temple. As I lay in silence and inquired of the Lord, What dost Thou say? I obtained an answer, and always such an one as showed that, however terrible His frowns, there was a *loving heart* concealed behind. Usually it was some vain imagination, some high thought, which the heavenly Husbandman had in His eye; and so I was enabled to hold a sacred colloquy with Him, and my soul was at peace. In truth a sick-bed is generally the place where the blessing of the Christian faith becomes specially manifest. While in the heart of a child of the world sickness breeds obstinacy, pride, and discontent, and so eventually, when it has passed away, leaves no fruit, the contrary happens with the child of God. In his hours of languishing the mysteries of God's love and the unsearchable depths of His wisdom are properly disclosed. Such a silent sick-room sets a man once more loose from the world and its attachments, and from all courtship of human favour and human praise, and sends him back into life with a new and single eye.

Alas! I am conscious to myself how subtly and deceitfully

self-love can creep back into a heart which has been sanctified by faith; therefore it is that I fervently pray, "Keep me in safety, O Lord, and let not my last state be worse than my first. Behold, I myself implore of Thee to humble me. That is for Thee an easy task. Let me become like Nebuchadnezzar, an object of scorn and insult to all mankind, rather than fall into pride, and thereby lose Thee, who art my dearest portion. For hast Thou not declared that Thou dwellest with those only who are of a humble and a contrite heart?"

How stealthily proud self contrives its light and gifts to vaunt!
The Lord we thank and praise so long as He does what we want.
His ways, when they are straight and smooth, all just and right we call,
And only murmur and complain when hardships on us fall.
But, Lord, Thou canst abase the proud: Thou from his throne on high
Didst thrust the King of Babel down among the brutes to lie.
Then did he own Thee God alone, and, humbled in the dust,
Confessed that all Thy works were truth, and all Thy ways were just.

32.

Of His Fulness have we all received.

What means this throbbing at my heart,
So blissful and so new?
As if there were some open part,
And heaven were breaking through.
'Tis even so; close not the door,
And a whole ocean in will pour.

John, i. 16. "And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."

Gal. ii. 20. "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

Eph. ii. 8, 9. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and

that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

BEFORE I had learned the nature of grace, I paused at this saying of the apostle, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me;" and I asked myself, What strange fancy of the Jewish Rabbi is this? Does he really imagine that the Messias, who has been exalted to heaven, is now living in him? Yet true it is, that He who ascended up on high, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father, did likewise continue to abide with His followers upon earth, and has become the life of their life. Nor is this merely, as when we say to a friend, I still have thee in my heart—meaning thereby, *in my remembrance;* for if it were so, how could the Saviour have told His disciples, "I go away, and come again unto you"? Or how could He have prayed "that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me; and the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them, *that they may be one, even as we are one*"?[1] Could He have said, "Where two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," if the phrase "*in my name*" signified nothing more than *in remembrance of me?* No doubt, to remember the Lord is to stretch out a hand towards Him. But the Lord must *fill* it. And this is done when, along with the Father, He takes up His abode in His children; when in His glorified humanity He draws near to the souls which seek Him; and, finally, when in the celebration of the holy sacrament He makes them partake of and feed upon Him.

Moreover, neither does this oneness with the Lord consist in *thinking* in accordance, or, in other words, being *of one mind, with Him.* That was not the way in which He Himself was one with the Father; and yet He said, "That *they* may be one, even as *We* are one." No; the relation may rather be thus expressed:—

[1] John, xvii. 21, 22.

My Lord, He is the light, and I
The ray which forth He sends;
How close the union, then, in which
Each with the other blends!

This, no doubt, is a matter which ought not to be lightly uttered. We should speak of it with our face in the dust. It is the deepest mystery of condescension. The apostle expresses it in language which, had he not put it into our mouth, none of us but must have trembled to repeat. He says, "*We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones;*"[1] and these are words which penetrate to the very marrow. We feel that there is in them a mystery—a thing which, to the world, cannot but appear mere foolishness, just because it is so profound a wisdom in the sight of God. Oh, how high must have been the esteem of the Eternal for man, although so poor a creature, seeing that He did not disdain to unite him in *marriage* with His only-begotten Son! His purpose to do this He announced so early as in the days of the prophets; for hear His words by the mouth of Hosea: "I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies."[2] If, however, the Lord merge Himself so thoroughly into those who are His, as that He becomes our flesh and blood, how can we possibly present Him with anything of our own? All is, then, merely effused out of us, just as it had previously been infused from Him into us. According to the rhyme—

The whole works of the Church by night and day,
The action of her living Head display.

He has exalted us to honour, and made us kings and priests unto God and His Father.[3] But as the Word declares, "The four-and-twenty elders[4] cast their crowns before the throne, and say, Lord, Thou art worthy to receive glory, honour, and

[1] Eph. v. 30. [2] Hosea, ii. 19. [3] Rev. i. 6.

[4] The Old Testament priests were divided into twenty-four classes, and the four-and-twenty elders here mentioned are their antitype, and represent the whole priestly generation of Christians.

power."[1] Who can comprehend the full depth of this homage, that does not know the mystery of the Lord's marriage with the souls intrusted to His care? Among all who have ever borne His name in genuine faith, there is not one who would not feel it to be *blessedness* to cast his crown in the same way before the throne; and this he would do, not from a sense of *duty*, but prompted by the inward *exigence* of his soul. It would be his *felicity;* and to those who are members of His flesh and of His bones it cannot possibly be otherwise.

Hence, also, the clearer the Christian's recognition of his union with the Lord, the more freely can he speak of what the Lord has enabled him to accomplish, be the things ever so great.

> 'Twas *grace* that did it all, he says,
> And claims not for himself the praise.

He who still hesitates to speak of his own works, shows thereby that in what he does he thinks too much about himself; whereas the man who is firmly rooted in the article of *grace*, and who constantly bears about with him the consciousness of being *one of the Lord's members*, relates only the doings of the *Lord* when he is relating his own. Would a child have any sense of self-conceit when telling with a light heart all the fine things which he had purchased with the money given him by his father? There is a passage in which the Apostle Paul avers, "I would not dare to speak of any of those things, if *Christ* had not wrought them by me, to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed."[2] He did not hesitate, as many scrupulous people do, to say great things of himself, and bluntly avers, "*I laboured more abundantly than they all.*"[3] To this, however, he appends in plain terms, "*Yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.*" And no doubt *upon every occasion* of his boasting the same idea was present to his mind. The rule, however, is, that the soul does not usually think much of its own work, unless it happen that some one calls it

[1] Rev. iv. 10, 11. [2] Rom. xv. 18—Luther's vers. [3] 1 Cor. xv. 10.

to account, or refuses to pay due honour to *the work of God within us.*

> The soul by grace renewed *performs* her work,
> *And seldom wastes a thought on it when done;*
> Or if a spark in the vain bosom lurk
> Of self-approval for some conquest won,
> Anon comes holy shame, and points the eye
> To faults so many, but unseen before,
> That to forget ourselves is all we try,
> And for a Saviour's pity God implore.

It was in this way that the apostle acted. He would fain have forgotten what he himself had done; but when others wished to forget what *the Lord* had done by him, he then stood on his defence. In such a case he could even *boast*, as we read of his doing in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, where, "seeing," he says, "that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also."[1] "I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me, *for I ought to have been commended of you, for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles*,[2] though I be nothing."[3] How great a hero in humility must the apostle already have become! for whereas to other children of Adam it is so sweet a gratification to have the opportunity of pouring out their own praise, this was done by him with pain and great reluctance, and only from *compulsion*. "Ye have *compelled* me," he says. Elsewhere, too, we find him averring, "That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly." And, "I say again, Let no man think me a fool." Here we see how it is possible to boast of one's self without in the least encroaching upon the rights of the Lord, to whom alone all glory pertains. Yet, notwithstanding, the humble-minded apostle makes no attempt to hide that he had been assailed by the old man with the temptation to self-praise, just as we all have been; and he speaks to the Corin-

[1] 2 Cor. xi. 18.

[2] Spoken in derision, as at chap. xi. 5, and not of his fellow-apostles, but of the self-enamoured persons who assumed the apostolical office.

[3] 2 Cor. xii. 11.

thians openly of the thorn in the flesh which was given to him, *lest he should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations.*"[1] That thorn effectually performed its appointed work; for what can match the affectionate humility with which in his Epistles the apostle subordinates himself to all men, and, as being the least among them, is ready to serve them all? There is only one exception. It is that of any attempt, while contemning Paul, to contemn at the same time the Master by whom he had been made so high and distinguished a member of His body. In that case, but in no other, does he stand up, and will suffer no despite to be done to that Paul in whom Christ the Lord had taken up His abode.

How blessed a sight does the Christian present who stands in the garden of the Lord, like a tree bending under the weight of its fruit, and yet in childlike simplicity remaining wholly unconscious of the fact! No: in place of taking credit for this to ourselves, our duty is to be continually praising Him, who of His good pleasure has made us *vessels of His mercy.* In every work of love which seems to prosper in my hands, I always appear to myself merely like the gardener who presents his master with a nosegay gathered from his own parterre. The master, if pleased to accept it, does so purely from *grace;* for he might just as well dismiss me with my gift, and even deprive me of the office in which I so greatly delight.

The life of the collective body of the children of God through all centuries is, like my own, really nothing else but a perpetual implantation of the Divine Son into the human race, in order that all may "grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ," and so "come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."[2] That stature, however, even a Paul is conscious that he has not yet reached; but as he says, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I also am apprehended

[1] 2 Cor. xii. 7. [2] Eph. iv. 13.

of Christ Jesus."[1] For this reason he likewise avers, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the *faith* of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me:" and what he means is this: While I live in the flesh, Christ my Lord cannot attain to perfect life within me; and therefore I meanwhile comfort myself in Him, and in faith embrace Him, as the merciful High Priest who gave Himself for me. And for a weak beginner like me there is consolation in this text. I am labouring to prepare a dwelling-place for Christ the Lord in my heart, in order to entertain Him there as a beloved guest, ever longer and longer, and ever in a more perfect way. But well do I know that I only follow after Him, and for that reason I also will take as the source of my comfort, and the foundation of my trust, Christ *for* me, my Advocate with the Father, so long as Christ *in* me has not been yet brought fully to birth.

O my soul, from His high and heavenly seat it is in thy power to bring Him down! Only show Him that thy holiest desire is to see His face. Surrender wholly to Him thy thoughts and thy will, *and be filled with His fulness.*

Listen, my soul, mark what I say,—
Go, if the Lord command;
And when He draws thee, speed thy way;
And where He stops thee, stand.

And still let Him *before* thee go,
Behind Him still go thou;
For safer rule this earth below
In vain you'll search, I trow.

[1] Philip. iii. 12.

33.

Draw nigh to God.

So precious in God's sight is thy free will,
That not even thy soul's yearning will He still,
Save at thine own request.
KINGS *are not served by* SLAVES—*at His right hand*
None but the FREE *are privileged to stand,*
And wait on His behest.

JER. xv. 19. "Thus saith the Lord, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me."

PROV. viii. 17. "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me."

MATT. vii. 7. "Seek, and ye shall find."

JAMES, iv. 8. "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you."

YES, O Heavenly Love, they who would *find* must *seek* Thee. In mercy Thou dost come to meet us, and unveilest Thy beauty, which excels all that is beautiful upon earth. Upon a thousand paths hast Thou gone forth after Thy children of the human race, in order to put it into their *power* to find Thee; and yet Thou art a hidden God. Our passions have blinded our eyes, so that we pass Thee by a thousand times, and know not who Thou art. That is the reason why Thy creature needs to *seek* Thee. For myself, I sought Thee long before Thou wert known to me. I took something else for Thee, and stretched out my hand, alas! after how many of the good things which perish; and with hopes again and again disappointed, I was at last compelled to say, "This is not He whom my soul seeketh; I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my Beloved, that ye tell Him I am sick of love." In certain kinds of sickness, however, the patient is directed by an inward instinct to the medicine that can cure

him; and it is even so with the sickness of the soul. When all the medicine that perishable blessings can supply prove unavailing to heal its wounds, Thou dost then withdraw the veil which hides Thy face, and say, "I am the Lord, who *healeth* thee."[1] O what a proof of the nobility of man, that his soul can find no rest in the bosom of universal nature, and yearns for a good which far transcends it!

All, therefore, is grace, even although Thy creatures cannot find Thee otherwise than by their own seeking. Yes; it is grace in Thee that Thou condescendest to be *found*, and that Thou then disclosest a loveliness so unspeakably attractive that the soul cannot help clinging to Thy knees, and exclaiming, "*It is good to be here!*" It is grace in Thee to have implanted in our hearts so deep a longing, and given to men so lofty a soul, that the very fairest earthly objects cannot satisfy it without Thyself. But just because Thou hast endowed us with a spirit which is the likeness of Thine own, it is Thy pleasure that we should embrace Thee of our own free will, and be not merely *vessels*, but *fountains* of Thy grace. Thy desire was to be served by *spirits*, and therefore, that they should freely seek Thee, and voluntarily embrace the life which Thou dost offer. So greatly wert Thou set upon being loved *without constraint*, by rational beings made after Thine image, that Thou wert pleased to permit them to *transgress*, in order that, at least by stumbling, if not otherwise, they might learn to walk. Thou hast given to the bodily eye the power of shutting and of opening itself to the light of the material sun; and Thou hast done the same to the eye of the spirit. For that reason it is that the work of our salvation can no longer be accomplished by Thee alone. In the exercise of pure grace, and possessing, as Thou dost, the power to do all things, Thou hast constituted us *fellow-labourers with Thee*"[2] in the task, so that now we say,—

> The work needs two; God will not without me,
> Nor without God can I my soul from death set free.

[1] Exod. xv. 26. [2] 1 Cor. iii. 9.

Or, as St Augustine affirms, "God chose to create me without my aid, but without my aid He does not choose to create me again." But Thy very nature is love; and therefore, in loving, Thou hast always been the first to begin, and still Thou doest it every day, for

> Hadst Thou not set on us Thy heart,
> We ne'er had sought Thee on our part.

The *initiative* has always been on Thy side. It is involved in the decree, "*Let us make man after our own image;*" for by making men after Thine own image, Thou hast made them free spirits, as Thou Thyself art a Spirit, and hast implanted in their hearts an inextinguishable longing which impels them towards Thee. Yes; at our creation Thou didst so closely link and betroth Thyself to us, that a human soul separated from Thee must needs wander about upon the earth, like a bride bereft of her bridegroom, experiencing a disquiet and a longing which has its source in Thee, and leads back to Thee again. In fact, is not the human soul the bride of the Song of Solomon, who, having lost her Beloved, goeth about in the streets and the broad ways of the city until she has found Him?[1] Yes, O Thou whose nature is love, it has still been Thine *to begin*. For when in their blindness the sons of men discerned Thee not beneath the veil of nature, Thou didst appear among them in the person of Him who is Thine image, that thus they might be able to embrace Thee. Long before I was capable of thought Thou didst think of me; and long before I knew what love was, I was the object of Thy love.

Thou preservest Thy creatures by daily creating and giving them life and welfare afresh; and Thou doest the same with Thy spiritual creation, the regenerate man. We have not *yet become*, but are only from day to day *becoming*, Christians. And so every day dost Thou commence Thy work within us by those gentle stirrings which come from the heavenly Father, and draw us to the Son, who then shows us by whom we were drawn. Thou stationest Thy preachers everywhere—in the

[1] Song of Sol. iii. 1-4; v. 6-8.

material creation, in the Holy Scriptures, in the Church of Christ—and provokest us to love Thee in ways without end. And hence, when Thy children seek Thee for the sake of Thy gifts, they but fulfil the saying of Scripture, that "*Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly.*" We must already possess some gift of Thine before we can receive Thy other gifts; but who is there who *has not already received some gift from Thee?*

Thou encouragest us by Thy Word, saying, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."[1] How wonderfully in this text hast Thou interwoven *Thy* work with *ours!* With so holy earnestness dost Thou enjoin us to work out our own salvation, that we expect nothing else than to be told that the power both to will and to do it is in *our own* hand. But no; rather dost Thou incite us to work by the thought that both our willing and doing proceed from Thee. And in this, O Heavenly Wisdom, I understand Thy purpose. Thy desire is, to represent as gifts of Thine, and to give a sacred character to, the secret impulses and aspirations of our nature, which begin to stir within us simultaneously with the light that falls upon our bodily eye, in order that, looking upon them as the messengers of a great King who seeks an entrance into our hearts, we may never repel a single one of them, but, without excuse or evasion, may go where they urge, and stand where they stop us. Yes; that is what Thou meanest to tell us by Thy apostle, and it is a sacred truth. O how much holier men would be if they would but receive with fear and trembling the yearnings and impulses in their bosoms, as if these were the heralds of a mighty monarch who brings a blessing with Him where He is welcomed, but where He is repulsed leaves behind Him a curse! The longing of a human soul after Thee is Thy boon; and when a mortal spirit yearns for God, it is a proof that God has already yearned for it. Even an Eastern poet could say,

[1] Philip. ii. 12, 13.

Each "*Lord, appear,*" thy lips pronounce, contains My "*Here am I*"—
A special messenger I send, veiled in thine every sigh;
Thy love is but a girdle of the love *I* bear to thee—
And sleeping in thy "*Come, O Lord,*" there lies "*Here, son,*" from Me.

Can any one who has become aware of this do otherwise than yield with fear and trembling to every such incitement? and yet, alas! we may and do repel, and when they are announced, dismiss them with such paltry excuses. It is possible for Thee to apprehend a human being, and yet for him to make his escape from Thy grasp. If it were not so, why did the Saviour weep over Jerusalem? why did He say, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, and *ye* would not!"[1]

For myself, with holy fear and trembling, I will listen to every word which Thou addressest to my soul, and yield to every incitement by which Thou attractest me to Thyself. Thy apostle says, and I appropriate his words, "I follow after, if that *I may apprehend* that for which also *I am apprehended* of Christ Jesus."[2] I will seek Thee, like the bride, in all streets and broad ways, but chiefly in those places where Thou hast promised to be present—in the assembly of the saints, in the silent closet, in prayer, in the preaching of the Word, and in the Holy Sacrament. I will rise up early and dismiss slumber from mine eyes; at night I will not lay me down upon my bed until I can exult in the assurance that Thou art wholly mine.

And if, dear Master, I am at any time conscious that Thou art absent from me, I will not cast upon *Thee* the blame, but rather take it to myself. I will not ask of Thee, Why dost Thou *deny* me Thy presence? but I will ask myself, Why did I not more earnestly *sue* for it? Thou hast given us a promise in Thy Word, saying, "*Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you.*" And therefore, when I do not taste the sweetness of Thy presence, ought I not to look upon it as a sure sign that I have not drawn nigh to Thee, or have not sought Thee where Thou art willing to let Thyself be found? Thou

[1] Luke, xiii. 34; xix. 41. [2] Philip. iii. 12.

hast plainly told us where Thou wilt give our souls an interview; and if I do not attend at the appointed place, the fault is my own. If, however, I listen to Thy Word, and, drawn by the attractive power of Thy grace, wait upon Thee at the place assigned, and if Thou there meet and hold intercourse with me, so that I can affirm, "Now He is mine, and I am His," ought I in such circumstances to say that this is my *desert?* O tell me, when the hungry man stretches out his hand and receives the bread offered by his benefactor, ought he to say that it is his desert that his hunger has been appeased? No. It would indeed be his folly and his fault were he to reject the bread, and it is wisdom to accept it. But as for *desert*, that is not the right word. In the spiritual case there is even a greater difference. For didst not Thou implant in my soul the very capacity of hungering after Thee? Is it not to *Thee* that it owes the power of receiving the Holy Spirit, and holding fellowship with Him when He comes to enlighten and sanctify? And if, moreover, in loving-kindness, patience, and long-suffering, Thou bringest to us upon all our ways this spiritual food, and, though often dismissed, still returnest with it again, how can I say that it is my *desert* if I be filled? No; there is in this *honour*, *dignity*, and *blessedness*, but no *desert* of mine.

SOUL.

Dear Lord, Thou art indeed a precious portion, and I rejoice that I possess Thee. But why dost Thou condescend to be found only by those who *seek* Thee?

GOD THE LORD.

When thou wert created, O man, to be
Thy portion myself I designed;
So I took of my glory to give to thee,
And my image I stamped on thy mind.

Thou art my thought, like the creatures all,
Which with my good gifts I endow;
But that was an honour for thee too small—
The thought that *re-thinks* me art thou.

The universe rose when the word I spoke,
My infinite fulness to preach—
Like crystal transparent and bright from the rock,
But bereft was the crystal of *speech.*

Thy mouth I have opened, O man, and thee
Appointed to speak for the mutes;
And thy task is to praise and magnify
My name and my attributes.

34.

Jesus withdrew Himself and prayed.

"I have no time," is what you say
To God, who seeks by night and day
To draw thee from the world away
To silence and eternity.

MATT. xiv. 23. "Jesus went up into a mountain apart to pray."

LUKE, v. 16. "And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed."

REV. iii. 20. "If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

THERE are other passages in which, just as in these, it is recorded of the Saviour that He retired into solitude in order to be alone with God; and if He who said, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man *which is in heaven*," often yearned to leave behind Him all created things, and in thought to be wholly with the heavenly Father, how much more must this be salutary for me! In these times of ours, life is becoming ever more and more noisy and distracting. And yet, notwithstand-

ing, I find that men are ever less and less seeking that solitude which might protect them from the influence of this distraction. A sort of disquiet is creeping over all, even the disciples of Jesus, disqualifying them for imbibing in any rich measure the influences of the light from on high; for it is only on the bright and smooth mirror of the water that the sun can reflect its face. Men now live in the fleeting present, and have no longer time to think either of the *past* or of the *future*. The consequence is, that even in the present they do not live as they ought.

O God, how sacred to me were the hours which I spent in solitude with Thee! My soul emerged from them as if from a bath. During its daily avocations, life with its multitudinous sounds rushes past like a roaring waterfall deafening our ears, so that we cannot understand ourselves, nor even God when He speaks to us. How differently do all things appear, how different we appear to ourselves, when, after the bustle of the day, sacred and silent night has crept on! Then do voices within and around us, which before found no articulate words, begin to speak. Often, however, these voices are painful to the hearer, and therefore it is that he flies from hours of solitude. But shut not thine ears, dear reader: among them there is many a voice that calls thee home, and such a voice is always sad. But wilt thou, for no better reason than merely to spare thyself a touch of home-sickness, try to forget, in this far country, that thou *hast* a home elsewhere? That is not wise, for so a time will come when even at home thou wilt appear a stranger. Seek to be alone with thyself. Every season of solitude is as a silent night, in which, when the din of this world dies away, boding voices from another begin to sound.

Art thou then so much afraid to have no companion but thyself? Ah! I know full well what thou fearest still more. It is lest another join the company whom thou art averse to see, and he is thy conscience. But remember that the companion whom thus thou shunnest is *God;* and can it be that thou art reconciled to Him if thou art afraid of *His company?* As

yet, when thou dost not *see Him*, thou only *hearest* His voice, and that affrights thee. What will happen when He shall be revealed to thy sight, and when His eye shall meet thine? What good would it do thee to be admitted with Him into heaven? In the place where the blessed exult thou wouldst quake.

In a house in which the mortar was dropping from the walls, and the rafters were beginning to break, there lived a man who was so deeply absorbed in his business, that to one of his friends who sought to speak with him alone in order to warn him of his danger, he answered, "I have no time." Thou laughest at his folly, but thou art thyself the fool. Believe me, dear reader, unconscious of it although thou art, thy business is more important to thee than thyself; for otherwise how couldst thou decline when the voice of thy heavenly Friend bids thee retire with Him, that He may inform thee about thyself and thine earthly tabernacle? Thou hast a certain feeling, though thou wilt not own it to thyself, that thou art *not well*, and yet thou shunnest so much as even an interview with thy Physician. Can that help thee? No; it helps thee *nothing*. Poor blinded man! from the loud tumult of life thou wilt be hurried unexpectedly away, and then thou wilt be brought into a solitude where the voices from which thou didst here endeavour to escape must of necessity be heard. Here they were the voices of a *friend;* there they will be the voice of thy *Judge*.

> To thy soul's inmost shrine repair,
> And there with God converse and dwell;
> To Him that knows that palace fair
> The world will seem a prison cell.

Consider, O my soul, how great an honour thou contemnest in order to pursue a paltry enjoyment. Thou hastenest in all directions to visit men; and thy God is waiting for thee within, and thou permittest Him to wait. Thou wouldst shun this most honourable of interviews far less, hadst thou but experienced the kindness and condescension with which, on such

occasions, He communes with the soul. No doubt He has many things with which to upbraid it, but He upbraids with such gentleness and patience that all one can do is silently to weep tears of shame. On the other hand, He has likewise so many blessed things to tell the soul about its native land and home, and the thoughts of peace which He cherishes on our behalf, and intends in the future to carry into effect, that it is good to be with Him. Thou imaginest that He comes only to judge and punish, and knowest not that He also comes to pardon and to save, and that at every such absolution a festival is celebrated in the inmost recess of the soul, on which even the angels of heaven look down with delight.

A feast of joy that never ends
Is theirs whom Jesus deigns to own,
Gives them His peace, and calls His friends,
And to them all His grace makes known.

Then melts for *Him* the sinner's heart,
And sweet and bitter tears are shed;
They think how well a Saviour's part
He did, and for them wept and bled.

In His dear presence there is bliss,
The heart no keener joy can know;
And henceforth all its prayer is this,
O Lord, let it be ever so!

It is this which He has promised when He says, "If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, *and will sup with him*, and he with me."

You who know it not from experience, cannot figure to yourselves the feelings of the man whose soul has thus enjoyed His presence, and who then goes forth again into the world. Like the brightness which lingered upon the face of Moses when he came from his interviews with Jehovah, he who has in solitude celebrated the supper with his Lord takes on a certain radiance from His countenance. *Reconciled* in heart on returning to the world, he surveys it in the light of reconciliation. To every erring brother he stretches out his hand, and

upon his enemy's head collects burning coals of love. All duties appear as if they were expressions of joy and affection, and from every stormy cloud of tribulation he sees the hand of a *Father* stretched out to save His child from falling. Then is God no longer the Being whose dwelling-place is far away above the moon and stars: He is the omnipresent One who covers the heaven and the earth with the shadow of His robe.

E'er since I knew the Lord *aright*,
I sup with Him from morn till night.

35.

The Spirit maketh Intercession for us.

My son, what marvel if there be
Deep in thy breast so vast a sea,
That day and night thy inward ear
The rippling of the waves should hear?

Ps. xxiii. 2. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, He leadeth me beside the still waters."

Rev. viii. 3, 4. "Another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and there was given unto him much *incense*, that he should offer it[1] with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which was before the throne: and the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints ascended up before God out of the angel's hand."

1 Thess. v. 17. "Pray without ceasing."

Rom. viii. 26, 27. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our

[1] The prayers of the saints are of great worth in the sight of God, and therefore He causes some grains of His heavenly incense to be dropped upon them, in order that they may ascend to Him with a sweet odour.

infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

HOW graciously, O God, hast Thou set open for me a door to all the joys of eternity, in giving me the liberty *of prayer to Thee!* Yes, doubtless, I too may say with Jacob, "This is the gate of heaven." A time will come when we shall be free from the cares of this life, and from all thought about perishing things: and so even now, while we pray, the earth, with its troubles, lies far beneath us. A time will come, when, in the mansions above, we shall see but one bright path, and that the path which led us to heaven; and so even now, while we pray, all that we have left behind in life appears irradiated with the light of glory. How solemn the calm which reigns in the heart that prays! It is the stillness of eternity, of which our God even here, in time, vouchsafes to us a foretaste. To the soul that prays, how clearly are all its own ways and devices, and God Himself, made manifest! It is quite as if we had passed out of the shade into a bright light. Yes, of a truth, *this is the gate of heaven, the antepast of eternity.*

Oh, were it possible always so to pray, then, doubtless, would men oftener have recourse to so precious a means of grace, and yearn after it from their inmost heart. Prayer, however, is twofold. Partly it is a birth of nature, and partly, too, a product of art. It is a birth of nature, for to what does *nature* prompt us more urgently than to pray? Or is prayer really anything else than the breathing of the soul? O Thou Fountain of my life, in my very infancy, and long before I knew either who Thou art or what is Thy name, my soul began to incline towards Thee, as the flower in a dark chamber tends towards the light of the sun; and I felt that I could not choose

but commune with Thee. Prayer, however, is also an *art;* and in the practice of it, as in the other branches of a Christian life, the word is fulfilled, "That whosoever hath, to him shall be given." Not to the souls of all do the gates of heaven fly open when they attempt to pray. There are many to whom it is allowed only to see through a little cleft; and many more who but clamour at the door, but to whom it continues shut. Not so the man accustomed to commune with the Eternal. All he needs is to present himself before His face in solitude, and every bandage and veil instantly drops away. Whereas he to whom God is yet unknown, even though he wait upon Him at the appointed place of interview, will have much to do before his communing becomes hearty and familiar.

O Thou sweet light of love, shine into my heart, so that even now in this poor life I may often celebrate with Thee a peaceful Sabbath, and enjoy Thy company in the fellowship of eternity.

'Twas once my way to set apart
Both place and time for secret prayer;
Now pray I always in my heart,
And am alone though anywhere.

This is what the apostle means when he admonishes us *to pray without ceasing*, and in such prayers all words and brisk emotions of the heart are for the time in suspense. Such prayers issue calmly forth, being in this respect like the solar light, whose approach we cannot hear, but which is yet accompanied by a warmth that testifies its presence. Yes, there is a deep, hidden colloquy of holy souls with God, which never ceases any more than does the beating of the pulse in a living man. It consists in an inward tending and aspiring of the soul towards its Source, and, although calm and silent, it influences and governs all the thoughts and volitions of him in whom it takes place. There are instances of the earth sending up from its lowest depths a tepid breath, scarcely perceptible to our senses, but which permeates the waters upon its surface, and impregnates them with medicinal virtues. And it is even

so with the prayer peculiar to the man of piety: it hinders him in none of his avocations; rather, where it obtains, do these all thrive and prosper.

And, dear reader, if thou wouldst acquire this peculiar kind of prayer which transcends both place and time, thou must begin with the humility of a child to pray at the particular place appointed by God for the purpose, which place is the sanctuary or the silent closet. Prayer, as I have said, is an *art*, and every art requires to be learned with pains. Do not therefore shrink from what may seem to thee the trouble of attending at the time and place which God has been pleased to assign. All art, however, by slow degrees, becomes at last a second nature; and so likewise, as thou wilt find, does the art of prayer. And when thou shalt have attained to such proficiency, thou wilt no more "either in this mountain or in Jerusalem worship the Father,"[1] but wilt raise the memorial of His name at any spot on the face of the earth.

There are a kind of prayers which man himself cannot make. They are freely given to him by Him whose property he has become in Christ. The Godward seeking and yearning of the soul is nothing but the breath of the uncreated Spirit within us aspiring towards its source. Sometimes it breaks forth in single sighs, and contains far more than it is possible to utter in human words. And inasmuch as it is the Spirit that puts such prayers into our heart, and as they flow forth undisturbed by human emotion and unaided by human art, so likewise do they take place according to the will of God: and with deep inward prostration before Him, the saints continually pray, and pray nothing else but "*Come, Lord;*" on which immediately follows the Lord's "*Amen.*" Nor can it possibly be otherwise, because such prayers are really the first steps of His approach to the human heart, and are merely sent forth as heralds to proclaim that the great King is about to make His entrance into the soul in a still more glorious way.

Lord, I keep silence before Thee, and suppress all feelings

[1] John, iv. 21.

and desires of my own, in order that Thou Thyself mayest speak within me. Let the light of Thy countenance shine in upon my soul, that the prayers both of my lips and my heart may always be well pleasing to Thee.

Soul, bid thy tossings cease!
 Down in the deep profound,
 Sink to thy being's ground,
And there find peace.

Thy God is at thy side!
 Offshoot of Him thou art,
 And so with thee His heart
Must still abide.

When the loud tempests blow,
 And on the angry main
 The waves roar back again,
'Tis calm below.

Happy such calm who knows!
 For that which shows us best
 That on firm ground we rest,
Is deep repose.

36.

God is the chief Good.

God is the great epitome of light;
If thou wouldst nothing lack, possess Him quite.

How the soul is taught by Heavenly Wisdom to pray.

I.

The Soul.

O LORD, I long to pray to Thee *aright.* Wilt not Thou Thyself instruct me how to do it?

Heavenly Wisdom.

Tell me, my child, why thou desirest to pray to me? Is it

for *my* sake or *thine own?*—is it to *laud* and *praise* me, or to *crave* some *boon* for *thyself?*

THE SOUL.

Lord, Thy question perplexes and puts me to shame. But the purpose of it is to bring to light what is in man. Thou art my chief and eternal good, and well I know that I ought to pray, and give Thee thanks and praise, *solely for Thy sake.* And yet there is something for which I have a keen and perpetual desire, and which I passionately long to obtain from Thee by my prayers.

HEAVENLY WISDOM.

And what is it on which thou hast thus set thy heart above all measure?

THE SOUL.

Lord, it is to know for certain that, after this life in time, I shall enjoy a blessed eternity in Thy presence.

HEAVENLY WISDOM.

And why, O soul, is thy desire for heavenly blessedness so keen?

THE SOUL.

Lord, it is, as Thou knowest, because this earth, with all its good things, cannot fully satisfy me.

HEAVENLY WISDOM.

Well, then, thou shalt obtain the boon on which thy heart is so fondly set. I shall command the chief of my heavenly ministers to apportion to thee the treasures of Paradise, and shall rejoice to hear that my heaven can give what my little earth was too poor to supply.

THE SOUL.

Hear this, dost Thou say? Methought that it was *in Thy*

presence, O Love Eternal, that I was to enjoy the delights of heaven: but how can even heaven be heaven to me, if I do not find Thee there?

HEAVENLY WISDOM.

What good, O soul, can it do thee to have my presence at thy enjoyments? Have I not promised thee my gifts, and was it not for these that thou didst desire to pray to me? Surely thou art asking too much?

THE SOUL.

O Lord, Thou knowest my inmost heart. It was *before Thy face, and only there*, that I thought of enjoying Thy good things; but if my joy be not also Thine, and Thy joy mine, even Thy Paradise cannot content me.

HEAVENLY WISDOM.

Well, then, if thou canst not be happy without me, art thou willing to have me, even though I bring thee *no gifts* at all?

THE SOUL.

Lord, Thou leadest me into temptation; but I reflect, and still I answer: "*Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.*"[1] Yet if I have found favour in Thy sight, permit me still further to ask a question.

HEAVENLY WISDOM.

Say on, my son; I wish to know all that is in thy heart.

THE SOUL.

Whilst Thou wert speaking, a blessed light arose within me, and now I know what Thou art. Art Thou not so transcendently great a good, that if I were only to possess Thee, I should possess all the other things which I wish to have—wisdom, and peace, and love, and beauty, and rest?

[1] Psalm lxxiii. 25.

HEAVENLY WISDOM.

Thou hast spoken well. I am indeed the shield of the righteous, and their exceeding great reward.[1] And now I understand what it is which thou didst wish to obtain by thy prayers. Tell me, then, if in asking me to teach thee how to pray, thy purpose was to thank and praise me, or rather, to obtain me as a boon to thyself.

THE SOUL.

Again Thou art pleased to lead me into temptation. Why dost Thou ask that question? Is not my love all that Thou carest for? What else but Thyself dost Thou give us in Thy gifts? and how can a creature laud and praise Thee more than by making Thee the boon for which he craves?

HEAVENLY WISDOM.

My son, thou sayest what is right, but mark the delusion in which thou wert entangled. When intending, in thy prayers, to *laud* and *praise* me as the chief good, it yet was not *myself* but my *gifts* that were the object of thy desire.

II.

THE SOUL.

Lord, Thou art to me so high and precious a good, that henceforth I will no longer pray for any earthly good at all, but solely for Thyself.

THE LORD.

'Tis well, my son. The portion thou needest of the good things of earth will be given to thee by Him into whose hand they are committed.

THE SOUL.

How shall I understand Thee, Lord? Is there, then, any

[1] Gen. xv. 1.

other hand but Thine own into which good things are committed?

THE LORD.

No, my son, *mine* is the hand from which all the good things both of earth and heaven are received. Why, then, wilt thou not ask from me the earthly ones, nor thank *me* for them? Methought I was so dear to thee that thou wouldst accept of no gift unless it came from a Father's hand. Methought that, on that account, all my gifts would seem to thee to be fraught with blessing. When I presented thee with an earthly good, did I not mean by it, no less than by my spiritual gifts, to attest to thee the continuance of my love? And dost thou value an attestation of my love at so low a rate?

THE SOUL.

Lord, now that Thou showest it to me, I see how foolishly I spake. It was, however, only that my whole endeavour might be aimed with a more single eye at Thyself, that I wanted not to have my thoughts diverted by any perishable object, and therefore meant no longer to pray to Thee for earthly blessings.

THE LORD.

Dear soul, thou sayest thou didst not wish to distract thy mind by looking at transitory things, but observe how thou didst divide thy heart; for didst thou not intend to praise me for what my heaven bestows, but to be dumb for every boon that my earth confers?

THE SOUL.

Lord, Thou puttest me to shame. In my desire to be *simple-minded* I have erred in my own wisdom, and become *double-minded.* As Thou art the Lord of heaven, and *no less also the Lord of earth*, I no doubt ought to ask, and likewise thank Thee, for earthly blessings. Forgive me for what I said in my folly; but, inasmuch as I have taken upon me to speak

unto Thee, and fear that my heart may cleave to created things, I now entreat that Thou wouldst Thyself teach me the right way to pray for earthly blessings.

THE LORD.

My son, thou hast said that there is none in heaven or earth whom thou desirest more than me, and that I am thy chief and eternal good. If, then, that be true, I will show thee the way to pray for earthly blessings, and yet to have thy heart wholly detached from them. Thou didst strive with ardent desire to reach *my* heart; *strive therefore after every blessing I bestow, as if it were a path by which my heart may be reached.*

THE SOUL.

Full well I know that the spiritual influences emanating so blissfully from Thee are nothing but beams of light, intended to guide us back to the Sun from whence they came. But with Thy permission I would ask if this be also the case with earthly blessings?

THE LORD.

Didst thou ever, at the rising of the sun, observe how its image is reflected, as if it were a miniature sun, in every drop of dew? Such is the relation between my divinity and all this earthly creation. In none of the creatures oughtest thou to enjoy anything save what is gentle, and sweet, and lovely; and whatever is gentle, and sweet, and lovely in any created thing, is *my* signature and mark. On the contrary, all that is harsh, and hateful, and bitter, belongs to the creature itself. And so, my child, you see how, from every created thing upon the earth, there is a way to the heart of my Godhead.

THE SOUL.

I do see it; but be not angry with me if I once again open my mouth, for there is still something which is strange in my eyes. If every created thing be a way to Thy heart, how comes it that Thy manner has always been to impoverish the

most pious of Thy servants here below more than all others, although they are most accustomed to read Thy signature and mark; while, on the other hand, Thou lavishest the good things of *earth* on those who are far from Thee?

THE LORD.

For no other cause or reason, dear son, save that I am the Lord, and have ordered all things in weight, number, and measure.[1] As the signature and mark which I impress upon terrestrial blessings are written in large letters, legible even to the simple, it is to the simple that in my wisdom I have allotted terrestrial blessings. But as my wisdom has inscribed a better signature, although in fainter lines, upon poverty and privation, these are the boons I have reserved for them who are the "children of the secret."

THE SOUL.

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in dishes of silver."[2] Lord, this is a hard saying, but Thy Spirit will be to me a light within.

37.

If we ask according to His Will, He heareth us.

You think our prayers He does not heed,
Because He often answers "Nay;"
And were that all He did, indeed
I scarcely would your plea gainsay.

But if beside the "Nay" there be
Some better boon than what we sought,
Methinks a senseless churl is he
Who says his prayer no answer got.

MATT. xviii. 19. "If two of you shall agree on earth as

[1] Ecclus. xi. 22.

[2] Prov. xxv. 11—Luther's vers.

touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."

JOHN, xv. 7. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

JOHN, xvi. 23. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He shall give it you."

1 JOHN, v. 14. "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us."

THE blessed promises which, in these words, the Lord has given to His children, have in the lives of many Christians, as I know from experience, proved a stone of stumbling on which not a few have fallen, and some have been dashed to pieces. Here the Saviour positively engages that every single prayer which is made in faith shall be answered. Oh how I rejoiced when I first met with this promise in the Holy Scriptures! And afterwards, when with the eye of faith I surveyed the long succession of His servants, from Gideon to Elijah, and from Elijah to Augustus Franke, to all of whom the Lord had redeemed His word, I felt that now my God was indeed a living God, and that as long as I lived He would never balk my trust. I saw the heavens open, and the ladder reaching from heaven to earth, and upon which the angels ascended and descended, that Jacob only dreamt of, was to me a reality. How, I exclaimed, can faith still be called an art, when He who made the heavens and the earth draws near so kindly to His children, and visibly stretches forth His hand from the clouds to take hold of theirs? Here only the half is faith, the other half already vision. I know of many souls who, in the happy hour of their first love, exulted in the same way; and then, oh how contrary did the event prove! They prayed—they rent heaven with their prayers. But heaven closed its doors, and their prayers fell back un-

answered on their hearts. It is dismal to hear it said; and yet what better proof can there be of the astonishing power which Christian truth exerts upon men, than that there are thousands who have experienced what I here describe, and who nevertheless continue still to pray on and to believe? It is, however, only by slow degrees that the child in Christ grows up to be a man; and there are ailments to which the awakened are subject in their spiritual infancy, and one of these is the vehemence with which they pant for special answers to prayer.

O Eternal Wisdom, how my heart bled when the conviction was forced upon me that I misunderstood Thy promises! For this, however, I did not blame *Thee,* but ascribed it to *my own* blindness; and Thou hast not withheld from me Thy light. Thou hast borne with my infirmity, and trained me in Thy school, until at last I have attained to *manhood.* No doubt the mouth of truth has uttered the words, "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." But we must not forget that from the same mouth arose to heaven the prayer, "Father, not my will but Thine be done." Can we evade the conviction that we never become children, in the full sense of the word, until in the sight of God we have wholly parted with our own will, and in sincerity of heart can say,

> Eternal Wisdom, all Thy will has seen
> Meet to allot me my own will has been?

All that a Christian soul has to supplicate from God is absorbed in the single petition of *Thy kingdom come.* And the question we ought to be asking ourselves every hour is, Whether, when we inquire and search to the bottom of our hearts, in order to discover what is the inmost and strongest of our desires, we find it to be, that God may reign within us, and every thought we think, and every throb of our pulse, be subject to Him? Oh how transporting would be the consciousness that *God was indeed reigning within me!* For now, alas! is not the human heart, with all its conflicting thoughts and wishes and emotions, like a realm in which the subjects have revolted

from their king? But a time is coming when He shall reign, and when all within me shall serve Him in holiness and love. And can fallen man utter a prayer with a nobler burden than this?

If, then, this petition be the sole scope of a godly heart, what can other petitions, which we offer for this or that particular boon, really import, save that we regard the things we ask as the best means for securing to the King Eternal His rightful dominion over us? Inasmuch, too, as the Divine Being, in His wisdom, alone knows what the best means for attaining the best ends really are, when He denies us the boon for which we pray, the denial of it must be a blessing no less than the bestowal. That which is the object of the heart's inmost yearning, He can bring about quite as well when He *refuses* to save our dying friend, or to remove the thorn from our flesh, or to cause the sun to shine and the rain to fall on our fields, as when He *consents* to do these things. A beautiful instance of this in the life of the great Church father, St Augustine, has often given me both consolation and light. He wished to leave Carthage, where he had become deeply entangled in the snares of sin, and to visit Rome, then the metropolis of the world; but his pious mother restrained him with her tears, and would not let him go, being afraid that he would encounter still more dangerous snares in the great city than where he was. He had promised to her to remain, but, forgetful of his duty, embarked in a vessel under the cloud of night, and in the very place to which her affection was afraid to let him go he found salvation, and was converted. Pondering in his mind how the Love Eternal had conducted him to where he himself had only, in the frowardness of his heart, thought of going, in the retrospect of his life which he takes in his 'Confessions,' he says, "But Thou, my God, listening in Thy high and heavenly counsels to what was the scope of my mother's wishes, refused her what she prayed for *at that time*, that Thou *mightst grant* her what was at all times the subject of her prayers."[1]

[1] St Augustine's Confessions, B. v. chap. viii.

Eternal Wisdom, ever since Thou didst thus illumine the darkness of my infant faith, how clear has it become to me that that stormy flame which once burned in my heart was all too impure! I required that the heavens above my head should be rent, merely because I had not sufficient faith and patience to recognise the traces of Thy government in the *ordinary course* of earthly events. I failed to see that the faith which discerns Thy hand behind the natural order of things, and with persevering patience waits for the appointed hour when Thou wilt give to Thy children what is for their good, is a faith harder to exercise than that which refuses to trust Thee, unless Thy hand be every moment visibly stretched forth from heaven.

What a noble pattern might not St Paul have been to me! At the time when Thou wert laying the foundation-stone of Thy Church, He had beheld thine arm visibly stretched forth from heaven. He had had actual experience that at Thy nod the earth quaked and the fetters that bound Thy servants broke asunder.[1] Although, however, he had in many ways actually *seen* the working of Thy miraculous hand, yet never once did he *crave* from Thee its help. For two long years he wore his chains in the prison of Cæsarea, and in that of Rome for even a still longer period, and yet we do not read of his ever having either asked or expected of Thee to work a miracle for his release. In complete resignation, he left it for the Lord to determine whether he was to depart this life or to abide in the flesh,[2] and whether he was to visit the brethren in the imperial city, or to have that desire of his heart unfulfilled.[3]

And by the light which Thou givest me, O my Lord, I also can now interpret the promises of Thy word in but one sense, which is this, that the great object for which Thy true disciples will ever pray is that *Thy kingdom may come;* and therefore that they will set their heart upon nothing, except in so far as they consider it *the means* by which that object may be pro-

[1] Acts, xvi. 26. [2] Philip. i. 23, 24. [3] Rom. i. 13.

moted. That Thou to whom alone the right belongs mayest wield the sceptre, is what they long for in their inmost souls. This is the prayer which knows no pause in their hearts, and which, O gracious Lord, on every occasion Thou dost fulfil, whether it seem good to Thy wisdom to *grant* or to *refuse* their special petitions. All Thy children are bound for home, and this one perhaps asks Thee for wings, but in Thy wisdom Thou givest to him only a chariot. Another prays to Thee for a chariot, and Thou givest to him a staff. But what does it matter, provided they all arrive in safety?

No doubt, when souls are specially dear to Thee, Thou mayest sometimes suggest to the heart and put into the lips the special petitions which Thou hast beforehand resolved to grant, and these constitute the singular cases of prayer miraculously answered. Ought I, however, to insist upon Thy doing this *for me?* Secrets are for kings, and hidden things for men of high degree, but in the kingdom of God I am no king; I am only a child of humble folk. On the great highway to Zion there are reserved *footpaths*, and this is one of them. For *me*, however, it has been appointed to travel with the crowd. Full well I see that my shoulders are too weak to bear the honours which Thou canst allot with safety to the dignitaries of Thy kingdom. When I reflect how great would be the temptation, if such as I possessed, like Peter, the power of saying to the lame, "Rise up and walk," or like Paul to the evil spirits, "I command thee to come out of her," I am afraid. And yet to pray with success, in a special case of need, is likewise a miracle. I am still, O Lord, in the lowest class of Thy school, and for one who has never yet learned *rightly to believe* in many of the manifest miracles of Thy grace, the power to *work* miracles would be an unsuitable gift. If perchance it shall ever happen that I am deemed worthy of so great a distinction, it will only be when I shall have learned to pray wholly *in Thy name.* And this I shall never learn, until I have fully sacrificed to Thee all will of my own. For the present, dear Master, my prayer shall be—

Grant me the wonders of Thy grace
In every day's events to see;
Thou meetest me in all my ways—
O that I sought to meet with Thee!

Better to trust Thy hand of might,
Even when by sable clouds concealed,
Than own it when, to sense and sight,
Stretched forth from heaven, it stands revealed.

O help me then by *faith* to live,
The *faith* that to the *unseen* cleaves,
Sure that eternity will give
Vision to him who here believes.

38.

The Lord's Prayer.

Here Christ's own words express my wants, and now
With perfect confidence to God I pray;
For to the prayer the Son hath taught us how
Can God the Father ever answer "Nay"?

MATT. vi. 9, 13. "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

FROM my inmost heart I thank God for having mercifully given to us a prayer in the very words dictated by our Lord. Oh, with what confidence we pray it, knowing as we do that for every one of its petitions we have the sanction of the Son of God; and knowing that, we likewise know that our prayers shall be *heard*, and feel as if the Lord Jesus were stand-

ing at our side, and acting as our advocate and voucher for everything we ask.

It may be long before a Christian advances so far as to become aware how great a treasure he possesses in the prayer of our Lord. At first we are apt to think that its petitions are by no means of so lofty an import as they might be, and that they do not afford an adequate medium for expressing the inmost yearnings of the soul. And yet, at last, we come to see that if we pray at all, this prayer must be our rule of direction. Luther says with truth, that no martyr in the world ever suffered such ill-usage as that which this prayer has had to endure. "When ye pray," says the Saviour, "use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do, but after this manner pray ye, Our Father which art in heaven," and so on. It seems, therefore, that His intention was to show to Christian people how many and how great things it is possible to pray for in very few words; and yet men who bear His name have been taught to mumble it over dozens of times, exactly as the heathen pray. Oh, when the salt has lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?

Never shall we learn to use the Lord's Prayer aright until we have really become His children. It is designed for men of *simple minds*, and it also serves to make us more simple-minded, simpler too in our desires, so that our wishes and aims are ever more and more contracted into a longing for what are the true and main blessings of life; all other things being left to the disposal of the grace and providence of God. The more the mind of the Christian is undistracted, the simpler become his desires, and the simpler also his petitions. And to this noble simplicity in praying, the prayer of our Lord furnishes us with a guide and directory.

"When I am about to pray the Lord's Prayer," says one who was much upon his knees, "I first of all think of my departed father, and of how kind he was, and of the pleasure he took in giving to me. Next I figure to myself the whole world as my father's house, and then all the inhabitants of Europe and Asia, Africa and America, become in thought my brothers

and sisters. And God sits in heaven upon a golden throne, and stretches His right hand across the sea to the end of the earth, and has His left filled with salvation and all good things, while the tops of the mountains smoke around; and then I begin, 'Our Father which art in heaven.'" Yes, all the goodness, faithfulness, and love which we find and enjoy in earthly fathers, must be taken into view when we lift our eyes to that great Father of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.[1] In this way the heart becomes as confident as if we heard His voice responding aloud to every petition, and saying, "Amen, my son." In order, however, that when we thus call upon Him we may leave behind us all the folly and frailty which here on earth cleave to human fathers, He bids us subjoin "*which art in heaven*,"—as if He meant to say, He is our true Father, for He is not merely *willing*, but has likewise the requisite *knowledge* and *power* to bestow good things. How beautifully, too, does He remind us by the word "our," which is prefixed to "Father," that when we come into His presence we ought always to bring with us a heart alive to the necessities of our brethren, as much as to our own!

"*Hallowed be Thy name.*" Mark how at first He leaves out of view all that the suppliant might wish to ask for himself. It is *Thy* name, *Thy* kingdom, *Thy* will; and this is the direction in which the heart of the Christian always tends. Yes; so transcendently great and glorious is He, the fountain of all good gifts, that when we pray for the glorification of His name, His kingdom, and His will, we virtually pray for blessedness to ourselves. O that men *understood* how good He is! O that they only *knew* His name! It is indeed like ointment poured forth, and filling the whole house and heart with fragrance.[2] After learning it, all names and titles of earthly greatness vanish; and though to many of these we may previously have paid homage, the glory is now given to it alone, and it alone is *hallowed*. I perceive so clearly that there is no name but His that is worthy of being hallowed; and yet wherever I

[1] Eph. iii. 15.

[2] Song of Solomon, i. 3.

look I observe the profanation to which, in innumerable ways, it is subjected. Men cleave to the gifts of God instead of to Himself, and bear His name upon their lips in place of in their hearts. Nay, when I question myself whether I hallow that name and reverence it in my inmost soul as I continually ought, I feel ashamed, and with deep emotion exclaim, "Oh, ever more and more let Thy name be hallowed in me and every human being!"

"*Thy kingdom come.*" Surely where so good a monarch reigns there must be peace and prosperity without measure; and did I but hallow His name, how could He fail to reign within me? Yes, if all that I know of Him—of His noble kingly heart, of his great and merciful designs, of His wise and holy laws—were sacred in my eyes, the inevitable consequence would be, that He would reign in my heart: my heart would be His throne, and all the members of my body and all the faculties of my soul His ministering angels. This, in fact, is the great effect that He is ever more and more working out in all who belong to Him; and I would be unfaithful to truth were I not to acknowledge, to His praise, that I myself by slow degrees have learned to serve Him, and yield to Him my members as instruments of righteousness more willingly than I once could do; and still better, to learn this lesson is what my whole soul desires each time I pray, "Thy kingdom come." Yes: in uttering this petition I strive in my inmost heart to resolve more sincerely than ever to surrender myself and all that I possess unreservedly to *His service*, that He may do with me as He will; and while I utter it, my whole being thrills with joy in the anticipation that the feud within me shall cease at last, and not in me only, but in all to whom He has given power to become His children. Not for ever shall His subjects be disloyal; not for ever will He need to upbraid us in anger, and say, "If I be a Father, where is my honour? And if I be a Master, where is my fear?"[1] No: a time is coming when, here on earth, "they shall not hurt or destroy in all

[1] Mal. i. 6.

God's holy mountain," and when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."[1]

"*Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.*" Oh how good and blessed a thing it is to know that the feud and rebellion which prevail here on earth do not at least reach to the bright regions above! How painful would be the thought that they did! When, therefore, I utter this petition, I figure to myself how it will be when, over the whole world, on the mountains and in the valleys, all altars shall smoke to Him, and all *men* present to Him the oblation of a perfect and childlike obedience, like that which the holy angels are now presenting in heaven. No other will but His is *good;* and the longer we live, the more do we become convinced of this, and the more earnestly do we *desire* that no other may prevail. No doubt, when we behold the disobedience which is shown to His holy commandments over all the earth, we almost lack courage to utter so bold a prayer. But the Son of God has put it into my lips, and therefore I can hope with strong assurance that He still thinks thoughts of peace towards the inhabitants of earth, and I can look forward to the time of which it is written that "God shall be all in all."[2] In this manner these beautiful petitions enable us to rejoice in the hope of that which is to come, even when our cheeks are wet with tears at the spectacle which is before our eyes.

"*Give us this day our daily bread.*" I ask not for wealth and a full barn. If the eye required to rest on things like these before the heart could feel tranquil and safe, what room would there be for the faith which cleaves to *the unseen* as if it were patent to the sight? What I ask is, that the Lord would be pleased to bless the labour of my hands, and by His blessing give me a token that the labour of my hands, performed in obedience to His will, is acceptable to Him. Certain it is that He rejoices when His children are unwilling to take even their daily bread from any hand but His own. In a family the children know full well that the father will spread for them the

[1] Isa. xi. 9. [2] 1 Cor. xv. 28.

table; and full well, likewise, does the father know that the children's eyes look unto his hands to give to them their food. But, nevertheless, it does the heart of a father good when the children do not keep silence, but take courage to crave from him this temporal gift, and thank him for it when obtained. Every day to the throne of the heavenly Father flock the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the fish of the sea, to receive from His hands their daily bread. It is, however, the prerogative of man that he alone is able to pray to and thank Him for it in intelligible speech. Oh how rich must that storehouse be from which the great Lord of the world has for so many thousand years been feeding and nourishing the many millions of His creatures, and has never forgotten one of them! How easily might we give way to mistrust, and to the apprehension of being one day reduced to want! That, however, is impossible, for "He who is Lord over all is rich unto all who call upon Him."[1]

When men pray from the prompting of their own hearts, they insist longest upon that which is needful for the outward man; but into the prayer which He has taught to us who are His children, the Lord has admitted only this one petition, and thereby has given us to understand that far greater is the destitution of our souls.

"*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*" Here He allows us to pray for the forgiveness of our debts, but He does not say *how often* a sinful man may use the prayer. What He does is to assign us, as it were, a place before the immeasurable storehouse of the divine mercy, and permit us every day and every hour to return to it and receive a fresh supply. Would it be wonderful if men were indiscreet enough to abuse the privilege? To guard against this, He has annexed a clause to the petition which may well deter the rash; for it is "*as we forgive our debtors.*" I am certain that wholly, and from the inmost heart, to forgive one who has done us an injury, is an act of which he only is capable who has himself

[1] Rom. x. 12.

received unmerited mercy in Christ Jesus ; and for that reason I also believe that it will not be so easy to abuse this petition. For myself, when I utter it, I set before my mind's eye my bitterest enemies—those who have done me the most crying injustice—and I ask myself if I am wholly pure and free from hatred and resentment, and kindly-affectioned towards them. And if I be conscious that this is the case, I then say, "O Love Eternal, like other men I have by nature a heart to which rancour and revenge are sweet. Now, however, I find that Thy Spirit has given me a placable heart, and that there is really no one on earth against whom I bear a grudge, or on whom I long to be revenged ; and therefore with full confidence I lift my eyes to Thee, and implore Thee to forgive me *my* debts.

"*And lead us not into temptation.*" Observe in how brotherly a way the Saviour has here again condescended to our frailty. Already has He provided us with weapons sufficient for our defence against temptation, and our deliverance from the fear of being injured by it ; so that His apostle writes, "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations."[1] Nevertheless, so wholly does He here enter into the infirmity of our flesh, that He permits us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." When, therefore, I take this petition into my lips, I figure to myself the thousand snares of ambition, avarice, luxury, anger, and malice which beset the path I daily tread ; I reflect how many and how diverse are the sharp rods and fiery furnaces which the heavenly Father has at His disposal, such as tedious sickness, disgrace, contempt in the eyes of men, misunderstandings with those whom we best love ; and I thus learn how averse my heart is to the cross, and how timidly I shrink from it in every shape. I reflect also on the many wiles of Satan, and the gross errors by which even the strong-minded may be induced to forsake Christ ; and then I cannot help thanking God from the very bottom of my soul, that by His dear Son He has permitted us to come before Him with the prayer, "Lead us not into temptation." It is a prayer so suitable to

[1] James, i. 2.

our condition, continually reminding us that here, in this world of time, we walk as upon glass, while at the same time it inspires us with confidence that we shall not be subjected to too severe a trial. "He tempers the wind to the shorn lamb." And as He permits us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation," certainly, if He do suffer us to be tempted, He will also make for us a way of escape, that we may be able to bear it.[1]

"*But deliver us from evil.*" "I still," says the man of prayer already mentioned, "have temptation on my mind, and think how easily man may be seduced and turned aside from the straight way. At the same time I also think of all the miseries of life—of consumption, old age, madness, and the thousand woes and heartaches which infest the world and torture and plague the poor and helpless children of men; and if my tears have not already flowed, they now come for certain, and with all my heart I could wish to be away, and feel sad and downcast as if there were no deliverance. But then we must take courage afresh, lay our hand upon our lips, and, as if in triumph, proceed to say, 'For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.'"

39.

I am with you alway.

You say that one no longer knows if now
The Church on earth exists;
And yet the offspring of her womb art thou,
And suckling of her breasts.
How can the child, who life from her receives,
Doubt for a moment that the mother lives?

PSALM xii. 1. "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth."

[1] 1 Cor. x. 13.

MATT. xvi. 18. "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

MATT. xxviii. 20. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

I AM a member of that society of the saints of God which descended from pious Abel to Moses, and from Moses to the little flock selected by the Lord out of the chosen people —Israel according to the flesh—that He might lay them for the foundation of a holy fabric, which reaches unto eternity. I am inserted, and feel so grateful and blessed in the consciousness of the fact, as a stone in the temple, of which the corner-stone, elect and precious, is Jesus, the Son of the living God. I am a shoot imbibing its sap from a vine-stock, on which beside me, as fruitful branches, grow a Luther, a Calvin, a Tauler, an À Kempis, an Augustine, a Chrysostom, a Paul, and a John. And even if around me here, in the present, "the godly men had ceased" far more than is the case, oh how innumerable are the hosts of those who have gone before me, and with whom I hold fellowship in faith and love and hope! Yes, even although I could do nothing but sit by the rivers of Babylon, and mourn and weep that the walls of Zion have been broken down, oh let me have but faith—the faith which sees that which is invisible—and then at once I become aware that I am one with the hundreds of thousands who before me have sowed in tears, but who are now before the throne of the Lamb, and are bringing in their sheaves with joy. "*The dead live unto God;*" so then, O Luther, you and Tauler, and Chrysostom, and John, and Paul, are not dead. You are still alive in the world unseen, and my soul, soaring aloft on the wings of faith, can hold converse with you. Yes, and your *word* still abides with us; and upon it, as a living bridge stretching across all the barriers of time and space, your spirits can find their way to ours, and ours to yours. When I read thy Epistles, O holy Paul, and thy books on the Imitation of

Jesus Christ, O beloved À Kempis, I need but to figure to myself that you still sojourn here on earth, and that they were all written as epistles *to me.*

It would, however, be a very narrow view, and the mere effect of melancholy, were a Christian, especially in these days of ours, to cast his eyes to some remote boundary of time and space, in order to realise his fellowship with a great Church. So narrow a view would be circumscribed within his own immediate sphere, and probably would not penetrate very deeply even there. Verily the Church of Christ does exist here on earth. It is in the midst of us, *and we are in it.* Did not the Church give me birth? Is she not the mother of my faith? Was it not in her bosom that I found the Holy Scriptures? Have I not received the words of life from the lips of her living members? So long as the Church of Christ on earth continues to be the ark of the covenant in which the testimony of the divine word is preserved, so long as she has strength enough to bring forth children from her womb, and to suckle them at her breasts, how is it possible that they who are her offspring and sucklings can ever despair of her life? To the Twelve when here below, weak in faith, destitute of strength, and with a traitor in the midst of them, the Word of Life proclaimed that the gates of hell should never prevail against His Church; and now, after the Church has subdued continents, and from century to century has demolished the temples of idolatry, has preached the Gospel to the poor of every tongue and kindred, and made a prey of the strong, ought we *now* to despair of her existence? No doubt the poet sings,—

> "With love to us o'erflowing,
> The bitter cross He bore;
> *And now His name's forgotten,*
> Men think of Him no more."

But let a man attempt to figure to himself, if he can, the possibility of *that name* which is above every name—the name of Jesus—dying out and being forgotten upon the earth! From

the total impossibility of even fancying such a thing, we learn that faith in the *immortality* of a Christ dwells indestructibly in the heart of him to whose inward eye His image has once been revealed.

The congregation of the Lord, it is true, has at many a time walked the earth in very unsightly raiment; but did not her royal Head, while sojourning *here below*, likewise wear the beggar's garb? and did not then His regal look, without the help of diadem or sceptre, evince Him to be a King? And, in truth, in spite of her mean attire, never has the congregation of His people wholly lacked the same regal look; for with what other weapon could she have overthrown her foes? What, indeed, is the Church in her living members if not *the Lord Christ come back* to His disciples, according to the promise, not to "leave them comfortless"? She is His *body*, and through it we can visibly recognise Himself, as we do the soul out of expressive eyes. The Church is now sojourning here below, as once did her Lord, in a state of humiliation. As it stands before us, it is but an intermediate fabric between heaven and earth, without which we would lose the sight of heaven, and earth would cease to be of any significance. The sun stands behind the clouds, and its light reaches us only in broken rays; but a day is coming in which the clouds shall be dispersed, and then shall the King himself appear in glory, and His kingdom likewise be glorified along with Him.

It is with the Church collectively as with her individual members. Her way lies through the night of error and sin; the gold is mingled with dross, and the conflicts and tribulations of time are the crucibles prepared to purge the dross away. Even in mines the metal is seldom found pure and unalloyed; generally it is dispersed in veins through the mass that contains it. The same is the case with the individual Christian, and the same also with the Christian body as a whole. Moreover, it often happens that the fairest and holiest products of the Church are those which withdraw from the public view. In this respect they are like the good works of

the private Christian, in which the left hand knoweth not what the right hand doeth, and which are observed by no other eye but that which seeth in secret. As nature is noisy only when it rends, but silent when it brings forth; so in ecclesiastical history we hear far more of destructive commotions than of those quiet fruits of peace which faith brings forth in the interior of the soul, in the privacy of the family circle, and among persons of low degree, of whom history makes no mention. But he who would distinctly conceive how fertilising must be the spiritual rain with which the Church has watered the fields of the world needs only to ask himself, What would I have been if all the blossoms and fruits which the breath of my Master's Spirit has evoked were to be subtracted from my life? Can I for a moment doubt that what His Spirit has been and done to me individually, it has no less been and done to the Church as a whole?

For the rest, if at any time I find myself brooding in ignorant despondency over the fact that the godly man ceaseth and that the kingdom of God does not come with power, I try to imbibe strength from the thought that it is quite the same whether the Spirit descends upon many in drops and rivulets or upon few in great streams. And how if it be that the few who in particular localities lament the ruin of Zion are endeavouring to be all the more amply replenished with the might and gifts of the Spirit, being stimulated thereto by the distress which they feel? Their distress thus becomes the means by which the kingdom of God may be brought to such places in all the plenitude of its riches and power. Ah me! would that our lamentation over the ruin of God's kingdom were always to turn into activity in building it up!

Lord, hitherto Thou *hast been* with us, and *wilt continue* to abide with us until the end of the world. Oh give us eyes of faith to look steadily at the sun, even though its light shine through the clouds only in broken beams! Never, Almighty God, wilt Thou lack stones for the temple which it is Thy will to build up out of sinful humanity! Help me, that to the

praise of Thy glorious grace I too may be a living stone in the part of it where Thou hast been pleased to assign to me a place! Help me to understand *what gifts I have received.* Doubtless many more have been conferred upon me than I either know of or employ. Forbid that I should neglect or dream any of them away. Forbid that, in thinking of others, I should forget myself, or forget what Thou hast already done for me. How shouldst not Thou be able to lift up Thy Church from the depths, and set it on high, seeing Thou hast rescued myself from so deep a pit?

Through this dark world of sin and woe,
A helpless little flock we go,
 And seem of low degree;
But let the royal Bridegroom come
To wed the bride and take her home,
 And who so blest as she?

Here stood the Sun of Life concealed,
And through the mists its face that veiled
 Faint fell on earth the rays.
There full disclosed it stands, and bright;
No lowering clouds obstruct its light,
 And bliss is in its blaze.

40.

They continued steadfastly in Fellowship.

Gather the coals together well,
And each will help the blaze to swell.

Acts, ii. 42. "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

Matt. xviii. 20. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

HEB. x. 25. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is."

OH how blessed an assemblage it must have been, when, in the early days after Pentecost, the apostles and the three thousand met together with one accord![1] "One Lord, one faith, one baptism," was no doubt the word which echoed perpetually through all their hearts. They were *brothers*, which is more than good friends. It means *blood-relations;* and such they were, for the Lord had sprinkled them with His blood, and put one and the same Spirit into their hearts, just as it is one blood that flows in the veins of those who are kinsmen. "Every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him," says St John.[2] He who begat me to a new life is the Lord Jesus Christ: and being, as I am, His child, I have also in me some portion of His Spirit. How then should I not love those who have also been begotten of Him, and who partake of the same Spirit as myself? These early Christians loved each other, and their fellowship in the Spirit drew them together, as the members of one body cannot brook to be separated. They continued, it is said, in the *apostles' doctrine*, and doubtless must have conversed at large about all which the apostles told them respecting the Lord; and in *fellowship*, which certainly means community of goods, as it is afterwards called;[3] and in *breaking of bread*, or in other words partaking of the Holy Supper, in which their absent Master became once more present, and gave Himself to them; and in *prayers*, in which they gave vent to the sentiments inspired by their common fellowship in the Lord. As they had all their earthly possessions and goods in common, they, no doubt, likewise shared with each other their spiritual joys and sorrows; and this brother would say to that, "Such was the way in which the Lord dealt with me," or "It was thus that I found grace;" so that doubtless what the poet says was true of them—

[1] Acts, ii. 46. [2] 1 John, v. 1. [3] Acts, ii. 45.

" The wondrous story, ever new,
Scarce finished is again begun,
How Jesus was so kind and true,
And for us all redemption won.

How first He woke our hearts, when dead,
With messages of weal or woe;
And ever since has safely led,
And showed us the good way to go.

His gracious presence then is felt,
The Spirit breathes, our bosoms burn;
Our hearts with sacred ardour melt,
Our prayers to grateful anthems turn."

That was indeed a blessed fellowship; and for fellowship of the same open and brotherly kind who among us does not long? How many there are who at the social board have sung of men's common brotherhood, and caught enthusiasm from the strain! But it is a strain which they sing by lamp-light and over their wine. The sentiment which is expressed attains to perfect truth only *in Christ*. Mutually related as we are, even as descendants of Adam, we cannot live wholly apart from each other. Nothing but sin has separated us, and none but He who bruises the head of the old serpent can unite us again in genuine brotherhood. Can there be any one who has never felt how the sympathy of others multiplies joy and mitigates sorrow? and in the domain of religion this is doubly and trebly true. Prayer and meditation upon God come so reluctantly from my heart when I pray and meditate alone, but seem as if they were winged when hundreds begin to pray and sing along with me, and seal the same confession with one general Amen. I often think of the negro woman who was once asked by the governor of Surinam why she and her fellows always prayed *together*. Could they not do it each one for himself? He happened to be standing at the time before a coal-fire, and the woman answered: "Dear sir, separate these coals from each other, and the fire will go out; but see how brisk the flame when they burn together." From the mere circumstance that

when in fellowship with others our hearts grow warm, we can easily understand what the Saviour means when He says, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." And again, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."[1] This, says a devout man, is as when the whole children of a family take heart, and with one accord beseech the father for a boon. It is then far harder for him to refuse.

Awakened souls largely enjoy the privilege of fellowship, and there are not many who decline intercourse with those to whom they are spiritually related. Any who do it have either already fallen or are about to fall into a morbid state of mind; for as man naturally depends upon his fellow-men, so does the Christian upon his fellow-Christians. Does not each member of the body stand in need of the rest? How much of what is good we learn—how much of what is not good we get rubbed away, by communing with other minds! The Lord has vouchsafed His Spirit, not to this or that member, but to the *body* of His Church, in order that each in particular may share with the rest what has been given to the whole. They who isolate themselves usually do it from a secret pride; their obstinacy and caprice will not submit to receive instruction from others. If, however, even in worldly business, it be true that

> He who pretends himself to school,
> Has for his scholar got a *fool*,

the truth of the proverb is shown by still more serious consequences in spiritual affairs. No doubt the Holy Spirit, as imparted to individual believers, teaches them many a lesson; but that the Spirit of the Church is of still higher authority, may be learned from the saying of the Lord,[2] that if a sinner shall neglect to hear his brother, the brother is to take one or two more; and if he neglect to hear them, the matter is to be reported to the *Church;* but if he neglect to hear the Church,

[1] Matt. xviii. 19.

[2] Matt. xviii. 17.

he is to be looked upon as a *heathen man* and a publican. Hence, if we anywhere find true Christians in a state of estrangement from each other, we have to admonish them in the words—

> Children of God, if gentle charity,
> Parent of concord, in your bosoms dwell,
> Why let the separate flames grow faint and die,
> And not unite one common blaze to swell?
> Knit to one head, and members of each other,
> Let brother give a friendly hand to brother.

And no doubt those whose souls are awake, are glad to improve the blessing which drops from heaven when brethren dwell together in unity[1] and edify one another. On that account, however, they are all the more prone to forego another blessing—the blessing that flows from fellowship with the Church universal, which is Christ's body, and from the Church's public worship. Are there not at present many who cry aloud that there are few true Christians, not merely among those who hear, but even among those who preach? Now, it may not be right to spread a white salve over all the afflictions of Joseph; such concealment was of old practised by the false prophets, and the Lord censures them for it.[2] But neither, on the other hand, is it right to judge so harshly, as many are wont to do, of a Christian assembly who meet for divine worship. For one thing, it may fairly be asked, What brought these worshippers to church? Certainly it was not flesh and blood, but must have been the Holy Spirit more than anything else. This surely we may affirm, and especially in the present day, when the number who *frequent* the church is so much smaller than used in former times to be the case. And even though we may have to admit that, among them, this individual or that exhibits no other mark of the Lord Jesus, still if he does go to kneel along with thee and thy brethren in the faith, wilt thou attempt to hinder him? Is not the *weak* believer still a believer, as much as the weak member is still a member of the

[1] Psalm cxxxiii. 1.

[2] Jer. viii. 11; vi. 14.

body? May he not apply to himself what Luther says of the whole Church? "The true Church is that which prays, and prays with earnestness and faith, '*Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*' The true Church is that which, even in the present life, receives, not indeed the tithes, and far less the full harvest, but at least the *first-fruits* of the Spirit." May not, then, the weak believer call upon you to give him credit for as much as this saying affirms, seeing that, while in the holy place, and at such a time, his heart is with God and the Saviour? In this way it is that, even in our day, a stream of spiritual influence still flows through each of our worshipping assemblies, although it may here and there light upon many a shallow spot.

You complain that the *preachers* are dumb dogs, and that you cannot derive from their discourses any sense of your fellowship with the body of Christ. And much is it to be deplored when the preacher forgets the admonition of the Lord, "The prophet which hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully."[1] Nor can any doubt that a Christian sermon is a precious thing. But when the Psalmist exclaimed, "*I had gone with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday*,"[2] it was at the beauty of the worship of God's house[3] that he rejoiced; and yet that, at the time, included no sermon. Neither do we read that any sermon was preached when the apostles met together with one accord at Jerusalem. The things mentioned are just what we may equally enjoy in every good evangelical church. They were the "*apostles' doctrine*"—which we have, as often as a passage from the Word of God or the Confession of Faith in the Liturgy is read to the congregation. There was the "*breaking of bread;*" and this also is ours, with the seal of the divine promise, which no minister, however unworthy, can undo; and there were "*prayers*," which we also can offer everywhere, in the name of Jesus Christ. Even, therefore,

[1] Jer. xxiii. 28. [2] Psalm xlii. 4. [3] Psalm xxvii. 4.

although a minister may forget his divine vocation, and mingle hay and straw and wood with the pure gold of the Gospel, still, so long as a congregation has the Word of God, and a Christian Liturgy, and a Christian Hymn and Prayer Book, it ceases not to be a branch of the one Holy Church of Christ, for that, as the Augsburg Confession of Faith declares, is, *The assemblage of all faithful men, among whom the Gospel is preached in purity, and the holy sacraments are administered according to the scriptural rule.*

If there be in these days of ours many Christians who derive little benefit from the public worship of God, the sole reason is that they do not take with them to church the eyes of faith. If they did, it could not be that so much of the Word of God as is still to be heard in the worship of at least the most of our congregations would remain without a blessing. They also err in fixing their attention exclusively upon this or that one of their fellow-worshippers, or upon themselves; whereas, when worshipping in the house of God, our spiritual eye ought not to rest upon the neighbour on our right hand or him on our left, or even to be confined to the one little flock around us. Rather ought it to take in the great body of which that flock is but a member. Oh what a marvellous and delightful power would be shed upon many feeble Christians in these days, could they but thoroughly learn, when in the presence of God, to offer and to do all that they offer and do not merely as isolated individuals, nor with an eye to other individuals isolated like themselves, but under the conviction that their praises and their prayers, their struggles and conflicts, take place at all times in fellowship with all the other members of the vast body! This fellowship is beautifully described by Luther in the following words: "So, then, every Christian has the comfort of knowing that when the devil assaults him, he assaults not merely a finger, but the whole body of the Church—that is to say, all the Christians in the world, yea, God and Christ besides; for it belongs to their oneness, that there is no part or member that lives and feels for itself alone,

and does not share the life and feeling of all the rest—that is to say, of the whole body. Wherever, then, the humblest member in Christendom suffers, the whole body feels and bestirs itself. All run at once, and complain and cry, and then Christ our Lord hears and feels it; and though He may refrain for a little, yet, when He begins to look angry and scornful, it will be no jest; for thus He speaks by the mouth of the prophet Zechariah, '*He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye.*'"[1]

O grant me, Lord, that in my fight
With foes unseen by day and night,
Whether I watch, or praise, or pray,
Victor or vanquished, still I may
Know myself one of an unnumbered host,
Nor feel, like severed branch, my labour lost.

When singly I the foe provoke,
I fall beneath some sudden stroke
Aimed at my solitary head;
But if in compact rank arrayed,
I fight with millions at my side, no foe,
Whoe'er he be, has power to lay me low.

41.

How long halt ye between two Opinions?

Alas! why does my heart so often stray
Far from its rightful Lord? I hear thee say.
But tell me, e'er to Him thy vows were spoken,
Hadst thou WITH ALL THY FORMER MASTERS BROKEN?
For Christ allegiance will accept from none
Who do not first ALL OTHER LORDS DISOWN.

1 KINGS, xviii. 21. "Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the

[1] Zech. ii. 8.

Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him."

MATT. vi. 24. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

I MUST come to a clear decision of the question, Who is to have the government of my life? Alas! I have hitherto had too many masters, and not one supreme; for how can I affirm that any one is my master whose commandments are not the rule by which I walk? Every morning we ought afresh calmly and clearly to determine who our rightful master is, and then *turn our back to the world, and our face to Christ.* Unless we have firmly and unalterably resolved on this, it will from time to time happen, that when the world issues its commands on the right hand, and Christ His on the left, we will sometimes hold to the one master and despise the other, and sometimes love the one and hate the other. In nothing have I experienced the truth of this so much as in the matter of *men-pleasing.* It is amazing how much our thoughts and purposes and whole position depend upon our fellow-men. Even the influence that the place and time at which we happen to live exert upon our opinions and acts, is ultimately determined by some particular person. When, for example, I figure myself residing in another neighbourhood, and among other influential people, I have the conviction that then many things would appear to me in a very different light from that in which I see them now. Does not much of the disquietude of the soul originate in the circumstance, that instead of seeking to please one, we seek to please many? In this way we become too external, and the quiet and sacred fire, which ought ever to burn for God upon the altar of the heart, is extinguished.

Whoever tries all men to please,
Exhausts his strength, is ill at ease,
And God displeases still.

Try, then, in whatsoe'er you do,
To keep all right 'twixt GOD and you,
Let MEN say what they will.

Oh that we could but remember the woe uttered by the Saviour when He said, "*Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.*"[1] Even the common experience of the world shows us that it is far from easy to please all men, and that the very attempt has quite the opposite effect of not pleasing any. According to the old proverb—

Attempt to please all men, and all
With one accord thee fool will call.

Why, then, should we surrender ourselves to a bondage so disgraceful as that of subserviency to men who are our equals? The only true freedom is in *serving God*, and Him alone. And if subserviency to *men* be disgraceful, how much greater a disgrace it must be to be the slaves of sensual gratification, or of gold, or worldly goods! When the kingly spirit of man, who was made in his Maker's likeness, is brought into bondage by the enticement of a glass of wine or a bit of metal, O image of God! how vilely art thou then trodden in the dust!

But much also depends upon *knowing* the will of God. It is a very painful state when the will is sincerely set upon serving Him, and when at the same time we do not know how to serve Him *aright*—when we ponder on this side and that—when our thoughts, as if at war, accuse, or else excuse, one another—and yet, after the whole torment of choice has been gone through, we find ourselves at last standing in the middle between right and left quite as helpless as we were at the beginning. Surely we may say with truth, that this torment of choice was never felt in Paradise.

For certain our Lord Jesus Christ never needed to choose; and when St John writes, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things,"[2] was he not addressing persons who were in most matters also exempt from the same irksome

[1] Luke, vi. 26. [2] 1 John, ii. 20.

necessity? For myself, it often happens that I stumble from no other cause than uncertainty about the way. Perhaps I cultivate a false friendship with the world, solely in consequence of unseasonable reflection upon the divine command to "Follow peace with all men;" or I run in the same course as the world, because the apostle's precept, "To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak," has occurred to my mind inopportunely. If, however, the *only cause* of my heart being divided between God and the world were the insufficiency of my *knowledge* of the divine will, I should not need to be so much afraid. But in the minds of many who are certainly far more faithful than I, there is a hesitation and inward disquiet which originate in no other cause save that they often lose sight of the way; and this is a case in which it is far from easy to advise.

No doubt the old divines have laid down the wholesome rule, that what gives the flesh most pain, brings to the soul most gain. And when one considers the cunning devices of the flesh, the strange kind of logic, to use the words of Luther, which it invents, and the manifold excuses which it is always ready to offer, it may well appear to be good advice that

> The way that to the flesh gives pain,
> Is that whereby we heaven shall gain—

at the same time that is not so absolutely true. It cannot be affirmed that *in every case* of a choice of many paths, that is the best which is most painful to the outer man. For does not St Paul enjoin us "to *make provision for the flesh*, but not to the fulfilling of its lusts"?[1] Neither can it be said that in every case the best way is that which is most offensive to the world; for the same apostle exhorts us, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."[2] In such a doubtful case some will tell you to go to the Bible for advice, others will recommend prayer; and these are things which are very easily said. But the Bible does not always speak distinctly upon particular cases; and if, when we begin to pray, our

[1] Rom. xiii. 14—Luther's vers. [2] Rom. xiii. 18.

heart already inclines to one side, it is certain that to the same side will our prayers also bend. As the shortest way to avoid being biassed by their own hearts, pious souls have sometimes had recourse to the *lot*. For this they can plead the example of the apostles and the saying of Solomon, that "the lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty."[1] And if with that wise monarch we must affirm that "the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord,"[2] we can also as little deny that, in as far as the matter is *the Lord's*, He is able to speak by means of a slip of paper quite as well as He once did by the mouth of *an ass*. But then the question is, whether or not *we* have been *enjoined* to learn what He says from the mouth of an ass, and whether or not by such an attempt we do not cast away a far nobler gift with which He has been pleased to distinguish us. What if it was His will to make us *priests?* What if He meant to put into our hearts the Urim and the Thummim—the *Light* and *Law*—which of old Aaron bore upon his breast when he went in before the Lord, and by which the Lord answered his questions?[3] As we are priests of the New Testament, my confident belief is, that that is what the Lord will do to *us all*. The promise which He made of old to the prophets, saying, "Thou shalt call, and the Lord will answer; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here I am,"[4] He will still more certainly fulfil in us. The apostle Paul writes to the Philippians:[5] "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." "If any of you lack wisdom," says St James,[6] "let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him;" and St John[7] affirms, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." It is the *Holy Spirit* which gives a man this priestly unction, and puts into his heart the Light and Law, and with

[1] Prov. xviii. 18. [2] Prov. xvi. 33. [3] Exod. xxviii. 30.
[4] Isa. lviii. 9. [5] Phil. iii. 15. [6] James, i. 5.
[7] 1 John, ii. 20.

it insight as to what he ought to do or leave undone. There can be no doubt that after the apostles received the Spirit they no longer had recourse to the lot; and although the lot may be good enough for souls in their childhood, it is good only *before* Pentecost. If the Holy Spirit be come, it then behoves us to comply with the apostle's requirement, and to "*prove* what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God."[1] In doing this, it is true, we may often go wrong, still the doing of it is always *practice;* and as it is by practice that in other matters we obtain proficiency, so here also is it by "*use*" that advanced believers "have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."[2] No doubt the Lord does not stand on this familiar footing with mere strangers; He does it only with *members of His household*—those *who live in daily fellowship with Him*, and who in *all* matters seek His advice with the docility of children. For so He tells us when He says, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."[3]

Accordingly, in my opinion, there are *two things* which ought to be taken to heart by those who desire to know the will of God aright, in order in all things to serve *Him alone.* In the first place, it seems to me important that when we are in doubt and enter our closets to inquire of Him, we should go with an *undistracted heart*, and be *silent* before Him. *Come and bow down*, must thou say to thyself, and bring before the face of the Omnipresent thy heart in a calm and gentle frame, with no bias either to the right hand or the left.

> Enter thy closet, man, for there the Sun of Grace shines bright,
> And there God opens wide His heart, to give life, joy, and light.
> You only intercept the rays by word or act of thine,
> Even to thy thought and will give pause, and wait th' impulse divine;
> Let all within thee for the time be hushed in calm repose—
> 'Tis on the lake's unruffled breast the sun its image throws.

[1] Rom. xii. 2. [2] Heb. v. 14. [3] John, xv. 15.

If at the time of prayer thy heart be thus a placid mirror, then for certain the answer to thy petitions will not come from *thyself*—thou wilt *receive* it from the Master.

In the second place, it is by "*use*" alone that we acquire "senses exercised to discern good and evil," and hence our rule must be *to draw* from God's Word *more and more deeply* every day. No tree falls at the first stroke, and "to him that hath shall be given." Thou wilt thus become more and more sure of knowing correctly what the Holy Scriptures on all points mean, and wilt learn to go with greater composure of heart into the divine presence. Meanwhile, of this I am convinced, that the sins into which a man falls solely because, in spite of all his efforts and aims, he yet was unable to hit the mark, are the sins which will accuse him least before God. Ah me! would that I had no other sins than such as these with which to reproach myself! Ah me! would that *lack of knowledge* were the *only* cause of my heart being divided betwixt God and the world! O shameful frivolity! to see as we often so plainly do, a bait upon the hook, and to *be aware* that Satan has put it on, and yet to swallow it. O shameful indolence! so frequently to know that did we but cry to heaven the bonds would break asunder, and yet to hold our peace.

Alas! that still with feeble foot,
Uncertain and irresolute
I stand 'twixt earth and heaven above.
O Jesus, come! oh haste to save me!
Break the vile fetters that enslave me,
Draw me to Thee with cords of love.

42.

By Grace made free from Sin.

O matchless Captain! Thou
First bindest round each brow
The victor's wreath, and then
Lead'st to the fight thy men.

ROM. vi. 14. "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

OH how greatly the human heart resembles a ship upon a stormy sea, whose prow and stern alternately rise and fall with the rising and the sinking wave! I had passed through a painful season of weariness and sloth in the Christian life. At first, without being sensible of it, I gradually got into the way of yielding to the will of the old man. I wished not to be *righteous overmuch*, and ere I was aware, found that I belonged to the number of *them who draw back*.[1] All that I meant was to *give the world its due*, and, unconsciously, I became "*conformed to it*."[2] Long-forgotten foibles awoke once more. Daily self-examination was omitted, and every week I lowered the mark at which I aimed. Then there came a sore temptation, and, to my consternation, at once revealed to me that I had quite unlearned *to deny myself anything for the sake of God*. The discovery alarmed me. I felt as if I were an outlaw—as if the ground were no longer firm beneath my feet, and that there was nothing between me and a dreadful fall but lack of *opportunity*. My knees, however, had already become feeble, and I could not fly at once. Like one whom they try to awaken out of sleep, "In a little," I cried, and closed once more my slothful eyes. I forgot, however, the proverb which says that "deceit lurks behind delay." The opportunity came,

[1] Heb. x. 39. [2] Rom. xii. 2.

and with it *a fall*. Oh how sad a fall! I started to my feet. I was now sobered, and remembering "that He whom we call Father" judgeth, without respect of persons, according to every man's work, I complied with the apostle's advice, and "passed the time of my sojourning in fear." His admonition, "See that ye walk *circumspectly*,"[1] was never out of my mind. I kept a diary; I set a time for all my duties, and in the evening called myself to account for every hour I had spent; it was not *mine*, but the *Lord's*. For a while this went well—as long, indeed, as my soul was still feeding upon the forgiveness which had been vouchsafed to it after its fall. In time, however, the radiance of that grew more faint, and, on the other hand, the accuser within me became more loud and inexorable. My soul lost its wings, and I crawled upon the ground. If I had spoken a needless word, or eaten too heartily of some dish, I fancied I had committed a mortal sin. Then there came a new awakening. All at once a voice within me said, "Who will lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." It seemed as if scales fell from mine eyes. I woke up with a long breath, and exclaimed, "It is true; I am a *child*, and not a *slave*. By *grace* am I saved, and not by the *desert* of works." I *had* long believed this, and had even been living upon it, but it had quite *escaped from my memory*. It seemed as if I now heard it for the first time, and I was deeply humbled. Oh how hard it is to tread the narrow path of Gospel holiness without deviating either to the right or left, carried away on the one side by the stream of licentiousness, or taken captive on the other by the snare of legal bondage! We are told that a person once complained to Luther of his inability to distinguish the law from the Gospel; and that the Reformer replied, "If you could do that, you would justly deserve a doctor's degree;" and standing up and taking off his bonnet, continued, "If you could do that,

[1] Eph. v. 15.

you would indeed be a learned man; for it is what neither St Paul nor I was ever able to accomplish." The good man, it would appear, had laboured hard at the task.

A struggle to be holy is inculcated upon the disciples of other religions besides the Christian; but the true mystery of holiness, the jewel of the perfect, is *the doctrine of justification by free grace*, and that alone. That the natural man, if left to himself, never lights upon it, and understands it when first heard by him far less than he can do anything else, is a sure sign that this truth in quite a peculiar sense has come down from heaven.

It is the strangest thing of all,
At first seems even for babes too small;
And yet at length so vast it grows,
As if all heaven it would enclose.

It is the riddle ne'er made plain,
At which our reason bores in vain;
Yet when by its own self unveiled,
We marvel how we ever failed.

It is the spell of wondrous might,
Which every book denies outright;
Yet not a treatise so acute
Which it at last does not confute.

It is the problem which in vain
Seeks its true place at first to gain;
Yet every place at last it fits,
And heaven and earth in concord knits.

Spirit of the Father and the Son, instruct me in the mystery of godliness, that I may never loose it from my heart! It is by grace that I am saved, through faith. That is the rock on which I build, and from which I must never suffer myself to be moved by any works of my own, be they good or bad, nor yet by either the chastisements or the favours of God. The well at which I must always wash my eyes afresh that they may be bright, the altar from which I must always take new embers to warm my heart when it grows cold, is solely the faith that *I merit* the severe judgment of God, but that *by grace* the judgment

of God has been swallowed up in victory. When I seek His presence in solitude, in order to obtain strength for holiness, I never fail to find it, the moment I can enjoy in spirit that mystery of godliness: I might even say, the moment I bruise that peppercorn of life and power—for it is, in fact, fraught with a medicinal and fiery virtue, which penetrates all the members, but must first be *crushed* before the fiery virtue is experienced. It is a medicinal drop which must be *melted* in the mouth before it can heal the heart, and calm its restless throbbings. Many swallow both the corn and the drop at once, and experience from them no good effects. These are they who know the *word*, but have no experience of the *thing* itself.

There is no better *preservative* against the love of sin than faith in the filial privileges freely vouchsafed by God, and neither is there any better *remedy* when sin has been *committed*. If peace have then departed from thy heart, build upon the vacant spot a penitential altar, and peace will again return, for the Lord Himself will place upon it the atoning sacrifice. Can any one suppose that a servant who has transgressed his lord's will, and then with anxiety in his heart sets about amending his ways, is as well qualified to do good works as the child who has wept repentant tears upon his father's bosom, and has had his faults forgiven? Oh no! the *future* cannot be made *better* until the evil of the past be made *good*.

True love, and the disposition to do holy and righteous works, cannot precede the forgiveness of sins, but must always follow it. No doubt it might appear as if the opposite of this were true, from the words of the Saviour respecting the woman who was a sinner, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much," [1] because He afterwards said unto her, "Thy sins are forgiven; thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace;" from which it might be inferred that her forgiveness had been the reward of her love. Nay, is there not also a certain measure of love in every *kind of confidence?* how much

[1] Luke, vii. 47.

more, then, in that faith which is full of it, and which, despairing of self, clings to the knees of the heavenly Friend, and will not let them go until He open His lips and pronounce the words, "Thy sins are forgiven; thy faith hath saved thee"? But why then did the Lord afterwards reverse the order of the statements, and say, "*But to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little*"? Was not that aimed at the Pharisee who thought he stood in *no* need of forgiveness, and therefore had treated Him, who has power on earth to forgive sins, as if He had been his equal?

Did not the Saviour, when He said, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little,"—intend it as an application of the parable which He had just before delivered? and did He not mean that from the abundant manifestations of love with which the woman approached Him, it might be inferred that she had received forgiveness for many sins, just as, on the contrary, the haughty behaviour of the Pharisee showed that no desire to have his sins forgiven had ever touched his heart? Although, therefore, the Saviour had previously absolved her, still, in the presence of these self-righteous paragons of virtue, who were puffed up with their own perfection, and ashamed to have anything to do with penitent souls like her, He wished to express the absolution in very emphatic terms, and to declare her righteous before God and man. It is for this reason that He once more repeated in the hearing of all, "Thy sins are forgiven," and added, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." Although, therefore, there certainly is a *love of longing anterior* to faith—a love that disposes the soul to confidence in the Saviour, can cling to His knees, and render him who feels it capable of making great sacrifices, in order thereby, if possible, to purchase the forgiveness of his sins, still the *love of gratitude* is the sole effective kind of love, inasmuch as it alone is accompanied with joy, is happy in itself in all that it does, has in its heart no disquiet, but rest—no anxiety, but peace, and therefore never grows weary in welldoing. Yes, doubtless,

genuine love, and a disposition to perform holy and righteous deeds, does not precede forgiveness, but always follows it.

Help me, O Christ! that I too may experience within me the power of Thy death. There is in the fellowship of the sufferings which Thy love led Thee to endure, a power never to be acquired, let me do my very utmost, by the works of the law. If Thou chasten me, it will be for nothing but for having failed, every hour of my life, to recognise with humiliation of heart the magnitude of Thy compassion, and for having too seldom contemplated Thee, O crucified Love, in order that, inflamed by the sight, I might crucify my own lusts and desires. For those who are Thy disciples there now remains no guilt but one, and that is, the guilt of thinking too meanly of Thy love. That is the sin which breeds all the rest. Oh, forbid that I should any longer repair to other fountains for supplies of strength! Thou, and Thou only, art He who can strengthen feeble knees and weary hands and fainting hearts, and to Thee I look up, O God of my salvation!

43.

I am formed of the Clay.

Man is not of one substance made;
His soul is breath divine,
His body but a hut of clay
That serves it for a shrine.
Mark, then, the limits of the two with care,
And many a heart-ache thou thyself wilt spare.

John, xx. 13. "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."

Job, xxxiii. 6. "Behold, . . . I also am formed out of the clay."

DISCIPLE.—Alas! I too must exclaim with the Magdalene, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him," for He is no longer in my heart.

Master.—Did He then depart of a sudden?

D.—I was aware of it only a few moments before, and prayed to Him, "Abide with us, for it is towards evening."[1] But He went.

M.—I marvel that He went so suddenly—nay, even that He went at all; for the Word of Truth declares, "No man shall pluck my sheep out of my hand."[2] And again, "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit with Him."[3]

D.—That is why I weep: I was unprepared for it, and knew not how it happened. Oh, tell me if thou canst where He is, that I may go and seek Him.

M.—And by what token dost thou know that He hath forsaken thee?

D.—By the sorrow with which my heart is overwhelmed. For hath He not said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you; and *your joy no man taketh from you*"?[4]

M.—It seems as if thou knew only one source and one kind of sorrow—viz., that which is experienced when the Sun of the *spiritual* heaven is overcast and the terrors of divine judgment fall upon the soul. But, my son, there is a sorrow of a different kind, and which arises when the dark cloud intercepts the *natural* sun and discharges its burden upon the earth.

D.—Master, it seems to me that thou comminglest earthly with heavenly things.

M.—Take care, my son, that thou art not confounding the two; there is a spiritual joy and sorrow, and there is likewise a bodily joy and sorrow. The apostle speaks of rejoicing *in the Lord*,[5] of joy *in the Holy Ghost*,[6] and of joy and

[1] Luke, xxiv. 29. [2] John, x. 29. [3] 1 Cor. vi. 17.
[4] John, xv. 11; xvi. 23, 24. [5] Phil. iv. 4. [6] Rom. xiv. 17.

peace in *believing*.[1] Thou sayest that the cause of thy sorrow is the departure of thy Saviour from thee. Art thou then, poor soul! destitute of an intercessor with God, and hast thou no advocate when thy sins afflict thee?

D.—Oh, master, God forbid that it should be so! I have learned something of the loving-kindness of the Lord, and know that whoso cometh unto Him, He will in no wise cast out. Of that I am assured, but I would fain also *feel* that He loves me.

M.—Thou sayest that thou hast an advocate when thy sins afflict thee; and if so, no doubt thou canst also pray the prayer, "Abba, Father"?

D.—Yes, I can; for I know that since Christ has appeared and become my intercessor, no one can now condemn me.

M.—If thou canst so pray, and still complainest that thou art unhappy, I would say, in reply, that thou hast thyself to blame for thy sorrow. Once thou wert cast out into the open field, and there was no eye to pity thee, and thy God passed by and saw thee in thy blood, and said unto thee, "*Live.*"[2] Now thou art washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord.[3] He has opened to thee His heart, and said—

> If me thou for thy Master choose,
> Thee for my bride I own;
> *And what thy heart sincerely rues,*
> *Reckon as never done.*

All this thou believest; and with such a message sent to thee canst thou still be unhappy, like those who have no hope?

D.—Master, thou searchest the inmost recesses of my heart, and when I look into it myself I certainly find that I am not so sorely troubled as those who are without hope. The deeper I go, if I may venture to disclose it to thee, the more it seems as if I heard a voice constantly saying, Peace be unto thee! But the voice is very low, and my heart all the while in its anxiety beats so loudly that it drowns the consoling accents which come from beneath.

[1] Rom. xv. 13. [2] Ezek. xvi. 6. [3] 1 Cor. vi. 11.

M.—My son, it would appear that as yet thou art but slightly acquainted with the Example Book of God's Saints. Hast thou not there read what the Word of Truth declares, that there is a peace of the soul even in *the midst of trouble?* according to the words of the Psalmist, "*In the multitude of my thoughts within me* Thy comforts delight my soul."[1] St Paul also says, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair."[2] Nay, he tells us that a child of God may indeed sorrow and yet at the same time rejoice; for his words are, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing."[3] For just as thou mayest see dark clouds flying in the heavens while the blue firmament behind them remains the same yesterday and to-day; or as thou mayest perchance imagine that the darkness which oft overspreads it reaches as far back as the vault extends, and yet behind the stars keep their places unmoved,—so in all his tribulations is it with the heart of the Christian who is saved by faith.

D.—As the dew cools the heat, so, dear master, does thy discourse refresh my soul. I see well that I have misunderstood both myself and the Lord. Speak on and correct me, that I may grow wise.

M.—Observe, my son, that as man has been made of the dust of the earth, and dwells in a tabernacle of clay, his feelings do not proceed solely from the spirit which has been breathed into him by the Godhead, but often likewise from the tabernacle in which the spirit is enshrined; and consequently, that in questions respecting the inner life of the soul it is highly necessary to mark in how far its feelings are human and in how far they are divine, and to discriminate between what comes from the dust and what from the spirit. When a person is sorrowful *without having any spiritual ground for it*—when sorrow merely lights upon him, as the gnats do, which in summer play about the head—in that case, the feeling certainly comes from the dust to which he is allied. On the other hand, if he be in a cheerful mood, and yet *knows of no spiritual*

[1] Psalm xciv. 19. [2] 2 Cor. iv. 8. [3] 2 Cor. vi. 10.

ground for cheerfulness, so as, for instance, to be able to say that he rejoices *in the Lord;* then likewise, no doubt, have the sweet and pleasant sensations flowed from the earthly frame which he bears about with him. And if so be that at times the sun, the air, and the genial temperature of the elements can beget a gladness of heart at which we wonder, why, on the other hand, may not the sun and the air and the inclemency of the elements likewise engender in us sensations that are bitter and unpleasant in a manner of which we can give no account? Never, therefore, ought a soul to vex itself as if it were forsaken of the Saviour so long as it still retains *its belief in the Intercessor for sin.* The Saviour, whose seat is in the inmost recess of the soul, is there under the form of mere testimonies respecting Him, which may sometimes, for gracious purposes on the part of God, be withdrawn without the soul having any ground for anxiety. It is only when they have taken away from it *the* Christ, who sits at the right hand of the Father, that the soul has just cause to conceive alarm. Inasmuch, however, as Christ will sit at the Father's right hand, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and will there intercede for all who are sanctified by Him, never more can peace be taken away from the heart of a believing Christian—that peace in which he can pray, "Abba, Father."

D.—Master, as rain drops upon the parched field, so does thy discourse recruit my soul. My peace becomes like a mighty river when I rightly take to heart that the covenant of grace which has been made with me is so sure and steadfast.

> Man's emblem is a tree, which sinks its root
> Deep in the earth beneath, while upward shoot
> The boughs to heaven; then marvel not to find
> A twofold law his twofold nature bind.
> To earth one part is kin, to heaven the other,
> And oft they chime discordantly together;
> See, then, to mark in all thy weal and woe
> From which of the twain founts thy feelings flow.

44.

Thou didst hide Thy Face, and I was troubled.

Wilt thou the devil from thee drive?
By mere debate thou wilt not thrive.
But if CONTEMPT *and scorn thou try,*
The haughty fiend will quickly fly.
For never yet hath he withstood
A bold appeal to JESUS' BLOOD.

PSALM XXX. 7. "Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled."

JOB, iv. 17. "Shall mortal man be more just than God?"

MICAH, vii. 7. "I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me."

DISCIPLE.—Master, I come to thee in sorrow. Hast thou any comfort for me? Thou seest before thee a soul which has fallen never again to rise.

Master.—Tell me what soul there can be which was excluded by Christ the Lord, when He said, "*Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.*"

D.—May He not have excluded those who come to Him for no other purpose *but to smite Him on the face?*

M.—And for what good work of His[1] didst thou smite Him on the face?

D.—Alas! would that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might bewail the greatness of my fall! for know, the tempter hath emptied his quiver, and shot all his arrows at me. When I try to pray, they fly through my supplications, and when I seek access to the throne of grace, I confront a brazen wall. Listen to me, that I may pour out the affliction of my heart in all its magnitude into thine. The

[1] John, x. 32.

Lord was pleased to chastise me with one of His rods of love, and laid me long prostrate on a sick-bed. At this I ought to have rejoiced, for never is our bread so wholesome as when we eat it dipped in vinegar. But my soul became parched, like the glebe in summer's drought. For a while I panted after God, the living God, as the hart pants for the water-brooks; but He delayed to turn His face to me, and then I turned mine away from Him. A breath, I know not whose, in the night of my soul suddenly blew out the candle of the Word; all became dark, and the tempter had gained the day. For several months the blackest thoughts have been passing every hour through my soul, especially when I pray. Dreadful are the pangs which disease shoots through my bones; but much more dreadful the arrows with which my soul is pierced. I hear a voice within me saying, "Has He not been unto thee as a bear lying in wait, and as a lion in secret places? Forsake God and die." I would fain praise Him, knowing that He chastens us only that we may not be condemned with the world; but in place of praising I blaspheme, so that, like Job, I curse the day of my birth, and cry out to God, "Do not condemn me; show me wherefore Thou contendest with me." I forget that it is I who contend with Him,—Him who is my Maker and my Redeemer. Alas, that I dare not conceal it from thee! Like old sores in the body, former lusts break forth afresh in my soul. At the very time I am suffering in the flesh, fleshly desires wake up, and thus I think: If He have broken His covenant with me, and withdrawn the favour which, in the days when I walked in the light of His countenance, was sweeter to me than honey and the honeycomb,—why should not I make a covenant with the flesh whereby to reap some compensation, and though but for a little to cool my tongue in the terrible heat? That bleeding head, with the thorny crown, which often in my sultriest days gazed in upon me and brought refreshment to my soul—oh, how can I tell, and yet, how dare I conceal the fact?—that holy head I have smitten in the face, and called to it, *If Thou be the Son of God, why dost*

Thou not succour me? I have invoked the heavens and the earth, these wretched creatures, to bear witness against the God who created me. How dare I tell, and yet, how dare I hide it? I have wished that there were *some other God*, to whom I might appeal my cause, and find justice.

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," was the prayer of the Saviour for those who nailed Him to the cross. Oh, why have I become acquainted with the Son of God only to be condemned? for *I know* that I have blasphemed the Holy One, and seized the sceptre of His majesty that I might break it if I could. Master, *what shall be done to the man who has drawn near to the Son of God for no other purpose than to smite Him in the face?*

M.—Before *speaking* to thee, my son, I will first *weep* with thee, for sorrow that human nature has become so degenerate that such lamentable things as these can be related of it. Lord, if Thou shouldst mark iniquities, who shall stand? But now, my son, let me first of all observe that, however deplorable may be thy temptation, still thou art not the first, and neither wilt thou be the last, whom the devil has brought into such misery and distress. Thou hast thyself mentioned holy Job, how he kept his feet in manifold temptations, but how, when Satan proceeded to touch his skin and bones, he opened his mouth and cursed his day. Jeremiah ventures to say, "Cursed be the day on which I was born, because He slew me not from the womb, that my mother might have been my grave."[1] The holy Psalmist complains, "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me. . . . I will say unto God my rock, *Why hast Thou forgotten me?*"[2] Even a Paul thrice besought the Lord that the thorn might depart out of his flesh, and thrice the Lord said to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee."[3] If, then, the heavenly Wisdom deemed it salutary for vessels so honourable and dear as these to be thus made sensible of their excessive frailty, why should a poor child like thee be so de-

[1] Jer. xx. 17. [2] Psalm xlii. 7, 9. [3] 2 Cor. xii. 7, 9.

jected when taught the same lesson? Methinks it ought rather to encourage thee, and inspire the hope that great graces are in reserve for thee at some future time. For just as we see when the wind blows through the forest the tops of the cedars bend, while the humbler shrubs remain undisturbed, so do we learn from the experience of holy men that it is upon the souls which the Lord has selected for some enterprise of moment, and upon none else, that Satan makes his terrible assaults. The rule he follows when intending to pour into a vessel a large measure of grace, is first of all thoroughly to empty it, and make little that which was great, in order that the glory may pertain to Himself. To this effect is the admonition of the wise Sirach: "The greater thou art, humble thyself the more, and thou shalt find favour before the Lord; . . . for the power of the Lord is great, and He is honoured of the lowly."[1] Tell me why is it that none of the little stars, and only the great moon and sun, have a retinue of clouds?

D.—O master, how canst thou address such language to me, or how speak of such high things to one who *has struck the Saviour in the face?* Have I not confessed to thee that I have committed *that* sin for which "there remaineth no more sacrifice, but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries"?[2] And now, what possible consolation canst thou give me?

M.—God forbid that thou shouldst have been guilty of any such sin as that of which we read that it is impossible for those who have committed it to be "renewed again unto repentance." Condemn thyself with discretion, lest in making thyself little, thou at the same time depreciate the *grace* that is still in thee—an error into which souls under temptation have frequently fallen.

D.—There is, no doubt, consolation in the truth of which thou remindest me—viz., that so long as a soul is still capable of repentance, it cannot be in the condition into which I imagined I had fallen. But will it not show you, dear master,

[1] Ecclus. iii. 18-20. [2] Heb. x. 26, 27.

the deep misery of my heart, that true repentance is the very thing I lack? Nay, it seems to me as if my heart were as hard as stone.

M.—Thy sorrow, dear child, has hidden thine own heart from thee. Thine eyes overflow with tears, and look up to the hills from whence cometh thine aid; and thus sorrowing as thou dost, how canst thou doubt that thou *repentest?* Thou comest imploring consolation, and opening thy heart to me who am but the servant. Were the Lord himself here, wouldst thou not hasten and open it to Him? And dost thou still doubt of the reality of thy *faith?*

D.—I cannot deny that my heart is often soft, but then, again, it grows hard like the nether millstone. I cannot deny that the misery of my soul is often a great affliction to me, and that there may still be a little spark of faith left in my heart. It seems to me as if the Lord held me by a thread, although I do not see it, but neither can I deny that I have blasphemed Him, and dishonoured my Christian name, and that sinful thoughts have risen within me, with the mention of which I will not pollute thine ear.

M.—My son, thou knowest the word of truth, that there is only one sin which is not forgiven either in this life or that which is to come, and that that is *wilfully blaspheming the Spirit of grace* by which a man has been sanctified;[1] as a righteous judgment upon which sin, the Holy Spirit deserts for ever the man who has wantonly rejected Him. Thou hast not sinned *wilfully*, for thy heart can still melt, and thy tears flow, and, like Israel of old, thou hast wrestled with God. It may be that thou hast uttered blasphemous words against the Son of God, and cursed the day of thy birth; but hast thou also cursed the *Holy Spirit*, who began in thee the work of grace, kindled the desire of heavenly blessings in thy heart, imprinted the seal of *God's peace* upon it, and still, in the midst of thy great darkness, ofttimes allures thee by many a sweet and bright attraction? No: Him thou hast not cursed; for

[1] Heb. x. 26-29.

Him thy heart still longed in thy misery. O my son, thou knowest so well what divine grace has *withdrawn* from thee, overlook not what it has still *left*. However deep may be the wretchedness into which a man has fallen, so long as heavenly love *gives him tears to deplore it*, all is not yet lost. Thy despondency flows from thy bodily weakness; let it not induce thee to ignore what has still been left to thee by thy God, lest that also may perchance be taken away.

D.—O master, I see that "the heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips. Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones."[1] And thus are my bones refreshed by the pleasantness of thy discourse. But how wilt thou solve so great a riddle as that, in a heart which, as thou sayest, has not yet been forsaken by His grace, blasphemy so shocking can wake up, and that thoughts so impure can defile a soul which still belongs to the Lord? What weapon canst thou give me in such a case for attack or defence? what shield put into my hand to ward off these fiery darts of the wicked one?

M.—My son, misery like thine comes from the tempter of souls; and now, according to the wisdom vouchsafed me by the Lord, I will show thee how craftily he acts, and what is the weapon and what the shield which thou must use against his assaults. In the *first* place, then, know that he never makes his approach with noise and clamour, so that we can descry him afar, and stand upon our guard. For although it be said that he walketh about "like a *roaring* lion,"[2] he still contrives to keep his roaring, which is his eager desire for souls, secret until he has come near. No doubt thou didst not take sufficient heed to thyself on his first stealthy and silent advance towards thee, so as by watchfulness and prayer to keep him at a distance, which thou oughtest to have done. In the *second* place, let me say to thee, my dear child, we must never *dispute* with the devil; and if he have advanced so near as to be able to shoot his fiery darts at thee, which consist in thoughts of

[1] Prov. xvi. 23, 24. [2] 1 Peter, i. 8.

fleshly sin, suicide, and blasphemy, on no account think of discoursing with him. He is a far greater master in the art of disputation than thou, and if thou begin to argue with him, it is just as it were bringing *more* hay and stubble to heat his fiery darts the more. It was a saying of the pious Gerson, that devilish thoughts are like a barking dog, which only becomes more furious the more blows you inflict and the more stones you fling. Take, then, no further notice of him, but pass by as if thou didst not care for him, for there is nothing which he dislikes so much as contempt. According to the story which we read in the 'Lives of the Ancient Fathers,' one of them put the question to a brother—what he ought to do when troublesome thoughts suddenly entered his mind? and received this answer: As they suddenly came in, so let them suddenly go out. Don't fancy that it is frivolity when I say that in place of wrangling with the devil it would be better for thee to play with thy little boy, or whistle to thyself a tune. Moreover, neither must thou give him the satisfaction of appearing to be afraid that what he shoots into thy soul can injure thee or cause thee to forfeit the favour of thy Lord. Thou canst not hinder the birds from flying over thy head, but let them not make a nest in thy hair. When he presents thee with a long account of thy debts, amounting in all to the everlasting wrath of God, ask him to show thee in it the one little word "*wilfully*."[1] Until he can point out that in the account, he must instantly go his way. In the *third* place, my son, if, in the great flood of thy misery, there yet remain a little spark of faith unquenched, set thyself diligently to the study of the Word of God, in order that the spark may still burn; and do this however keenly the devil may wish to prevent thee. How great is the comfort that Christ imparts in His blessed Word, according as it is written, "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary"![2] Above all, be careful on no account to remain alone. Solitary places are above

[1] Heb. x. 26. [2] Isa. l. 4.

measure dangerous to the tempted; for as the Preacher justly says, "Woe to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up."[1] Oh, how truly may a Christian brother, however humble, become to us a messenger of God in our hours of gloom! In his exposition of the 90th Psalm, Luther makes the following humble confession: "It is true I am a Doctor of Divinity, and there are many who own that by my help they have greatly profited in their knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. Yet it has often happened to myself to be much helped and recruited by the word of a brother, who was far from reckoning himself in any respect my equal. The word of a brother is often of immense weight and consequence, when at a time of danger it is quoted and addressed to us from the Holy Scripture, for the Holy Scripture has the Holy Ghost as its inseparable companion; and in diverse manners does he employ the Word to move and encourage the heart. It was thus that Timothy, Titus, and Epaphroditus comforted St Paul, as no less did the brethren who came to meet him from Rome, although he was much more learned and better practised in the Scriptures than they." And though it should be that thou hast no *Christian* friend, it is better for thee to listen to the talk of *all kinds of worldly people* than to the devil's blasphemies.

In the *fourth* place, there is no doubt that it is chiefly when men are labouring under *weakness of body* that the tempter has it in his power to weaken them so greatly in spirit; for the history of Luther and many other holy men shows that it is mostly at such seasons that his fiery darts are discharged, and that they lack the power to repel them. For this reason, forget not, my son, to have recourse likewise to bodily help, and despise not what a skilful physician can say to thee; according to the admonition of Sirach: "Honour a physician with the honour due unto him, for the uses which ye may have of him; for the Lord hath created him, and from the Most High cometh healing."[2] Oh, how much bitter suffering might have been spared to many a noble mind if it had sought in time some

[1] Eccles. iv. 10. [2] Ecclus. xxxviii. 1, 2.

remedy for bodily illness! For it may happen that while the body is weak, an excess of religious exercises may only aggravate spiritual affliction, and that it will be mitigated by diverting the mind to the many pleasant things which are to be found in the world, and which God has created to cheer the human heart. I allude specially to His beautiful works, of which Sirach writes, "How amiable are they all, although we can scarcely comprehend a spark of them!" These things, my child, I have said to thee with good intention and hope in God, that by the help of His grace all the troubles which now only sadden thee, may ere long turn into joy and triumph, so that with the Psalmist thou mayest be able to say, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

D.—Amen, so be it.

45.

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty.

What is a PIETIST? *If thou wouldst know*
On whom the thoughtless crowd the NAME *bestow,*
He is a Christian who by deed and word
Offends the world, but loves and serves the Lord.

But if to whom THE NAME IS DUE *you ask:*
He is the man who wears a hollow mask,
And feigns, but never felt the love of Christ—
Called by another name, a FORMALIST.

MATT. vi. 17, 18. "But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

1 TIM. vi. 5. "Men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the

truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself."

2 Tim. iii. 5. "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."

Col. ii. 16, 17. "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath-days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ."

2 Cor. iii. 17. "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

Rom. viii. 14. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

THERE is no alternative. Whosoever will be the friend of Christ must be content to have sour looks from worldly men. The sea casts out her dead, and so does the world all who are dead to it. This was the experience of the holy prophets, who were made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions.[1] It was the experience of Christ the Lord; for He had to submit to hear it said of Him, "Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil."[2] "And if they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?"[3] "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord."[4] The Lord was the pattern of all wisdom and charity, and if He did not escape being insulted with opprobrious names, neither shall we, let our wisdom and charity be what they may. Dear Lord, one thing I implore of Thee, preserve me from carnal prudence, so that I may never think of purchasing a false peace with the world. I know full well how little it costs, according to the proverb, "Wash my face and I will wash thine, so we will both look well." And again,—

> If thou wouldst live a life of ease,
> Listen and look, but *hold thy peace.*

[1] Heb. x. 33; Matt. v. 12.
[2] John, viii. 48.
[3] Matt. x. 25.
[4] Matt. x. 24; John, xiii. 16.

He who will condescend to act in this way may indeed live quietly in the world, but I, for one, will not spend a crown to gain a farthing. No: like Moses, I choose "rather to suffer affliction" with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.[1] Dear Lord, well do I know that the reproach which is borne for Thy sake is honourable, and that the spirit of glory rests upon it.[2] Let them call me what they please, I know that with Thee I bear a glorious name—a new name, which the world knoweth not.[3]

In these days they have again invented a name with which to asperse the man who, as he treads the narrow way, carries his piety a single inch, perhaps, beyond their own:—they call him a *Pietist.* And what does that mean? Does it mean a man who has the form of godliness while denying its power? and do they really look upon us as *hypocrites?* Well, if in our days there are Christians whose hearts are not right with the Lord, who make an outward trade of godliness, and for that purpose put on the cloak of piety, without having a pious heart beneath it, ought this to be at all wonderful, considering that even the infant Church had its Ananias and its Simon the sorcerer? If there be not a hair in all the world which does not cast its shadow, who can marvel that in the vast net of the Church there should be found foul fish as well as good, and among the vessels in the great house of Christ some to dishonour as well as some to honour?[4] It is certainly possible that among the various sorts of people who in these days call Christ their Lord, there may be persons who take to heart the proverb, "Be half a saint and half a rogue, and you will live a long and prosperous life." We know, however, what sentence *the Lord* has pronounced against such hypocritical piety: it is, "*They have their reward.*"[5] They have sought honour and gain of *men*, and honour and gain they have found, but that is all they will get.

We must, however, concede to the world that it is not merely

[1] Heb. xi. 25. [2] 1 Pet. iv. 14. [3] Rev. ii. 17.
[4] Matt. xiii. 48; 2 Tim. ii. 20. [5] Matt. vi. 2.

among *hypocrites* that Pietism finds a home. Even among Christians—persons, who are really concerned about their salvation—there are those who may be justly upbraided with carrying their piety *too far*. At the bottom, no doubt, this is senseless language, for never can we have too much of anything that is really good. What I mean to say is, that a Christian, even when his heart is right with God, may fall into a narrow and gloomy habit of feeling his spiritual pulse, preferring one day to another, measuring his steps, and anxiously grasping even the fringes on the robe of Christianity. Now, inasmuch as that cannot be a right kind of Christianity which does not *flap its wings* with joy, alacrity, and freedom, and just as little that which contracts instead of expanding the mind, turns it outwards instead of inwards, and makes it melancholy instead of cheerful, the name of *Pietism* may rightly be applied to such narrow-mindedness. In that case, however, the name, strictly speaking, can signify only a *false kind of piety*. Piety ought to be the *fountain* of our life, but a man may take it into his head to make it life's only *business*. Piety ought to be the *soul*, but a man may attempt to make it the *subject-matter*, of all he does or leaves undone. Piety ought to be the *centre* of our life, but a man may take a notion of making it also the *circumference*. And let the eye once begin to look too much away from the centre to the circumference, and then room will be made for another infatuation. No doubt Christianity ought to be a tree which has not only sap in its roots but green leaves on its twigs and branches. Some one, however, may foolishly suppose that unless the *self-same* verdant twigs and branches which grow upon one tree grow also upon every other, there must be some defect at the root, and so may fancy it his duty, both in his own case and that of others, to *clip* the twigs and branches until they are all alike, or even in the room of some missing branch may try to insert an extraneous graft which has not *sprung spontaneously from the root*. In a garden, however, the green twigs and branches which grow upon one tree are never precisely like those which grow upon another,

although in both the root may be perfectly sound; and just as little are the branches produced by the root of faith, all perfectly alike; but in such a case it does no good to clip and prune, and far less to ingraft, because only *what grows out of the root* is of any value. To make the watch go right, it will be of no use to operate, however skilfully, upon the dial, so long as the works within are out of order. There is a text which says, "*Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;*"[1] and as there is no liberty where such importance is ascribed to mere external things, so is this also a *false* kind of piety, and justly may it be nicknamed *Pietism.*

At the same time it is necessary in such cases *to discern the spirits;*[2] for here, as in various bodily diseases, the outward symptoms may be the same, although they arise from very different causes.

In the first place, discriminate whether or not the *narrow-mindedness* which makes piety the sole *business* of life, to the exclusion of every other, belongs to the *suckling* stage of Christianity, and consequently may not merely consist with a heart that has been recruited by grace, but may spring from a heart that is *too full.* This happens when the grace of God is pleased to translate the soul from the land of Egypt and the house of bondage into the land of promise *in a sudden and unforeseen way*, which is the method Providence prefers to take with strong and ardent characters like Paul and Luther. Such persons previously hated with their whole heart the holy land; and, when surveying it from among the flesh-pots of Egypt, saw nothing but a strange and widespread darkness brooding o'er its plains. When, therefore, they are by divine grace set at once upon the heights of Carmel, and turn their eye toward Egypt, they behold its mountains and valleys everywhere covered with clouds and darkness too dense for even a single sunbeam to have found its way through. The laws and institutions of the state—the social intercourse of the world—its fine arts and sciences—all that it loves and lives for, appear like a

[1] 2 Cor. iii. 17. [2] 1 Cor. xii. 10.

long and weary night or a lying vision, or at the best a miserable Martha service, quite unworthy of souls like Mary's. Having lived a long life in total oblivion of the one thing needful, they now wish all at once to recover their lost ground. They have occupied themselves long enough with secular affairs, and can no more be satisfied with the amount of their labour in the spiritual field. Accordingly, they must be always speaking on sacred subjects, always praying and preaching, and always censuring the wicked world. It often happens, also, that while they are thus employed the proper time cannot be found for the manifold duties which the routine of common life, nay, which nature and their family and kinsmen, impose. And he who cannot go along with them in this violent onset upon spiritual things, must consent to bear their censure for sloth and backsliding. What is there in all this, however, which ought to excite surprise? It was not like a gentle whispering breeze, but in storm and earthquake, that the new life came to souls of this description, and so at the first there must be a deal of rubbish and dust. In such a case it is not possible that the old and new things can all at once find their equilibrium and agree with each other.

> How can the goblet's narrow rim confine
> The swell and ferment of the frothing wine?

Do not, then, proceed too hastily; do not from without pour water upon so sacred a flame. The best physician for a malady of this sort is *time*. When God by His grace translates him into the kingdom of His dear Son, a man is like a child born into a strange world. The age of infancy is that of the undeveloped flower—the season when the whole spiritual man still lies enclosed in the bud of strong *feeling*. Beware of wiping off from it with too rash a hand the morning dew. The longer the dew lies, the stronger will the flower grow, and as the noonday sun will come of itself and drink it up, there is no need for such precipitate action. The spiritual child waxes to the age of manhood, the bud unfolds

itself, the years of infancy go past, and as manhood approaches, reflection also springs up out of the strong feeling. It then becomes manifest to him, and indeed, if he reflects at all, cannot escape his notice, that the exercises and outward form of piety would be far too narrow a circle for life, and that were piety to be made life's sole *subject and business*, the *monastery* would have to become our world. His eye turns to all the forms in which life goes on around us, and then he cannot fail to see, especially in the environs of our *Christian* world, that there is scarcely anything which has remained altogether unaffected by the "Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world;"[1] and that at any rate civil institutions, social relations, the arts and sciences, are all vessels into which it is possible to pour a new and holy life, and in that way secure for it a vast field of operation. The Christian, grown up to manhood, perceives that piety is doubtless the *fountain* out of which the whole of life ought to be fertilised, but not life's single *object*. At the same time, he learns in general to direct his view not so much to the outward circle, the branches and the shoots of piety, but rather to the soundness of the *centre*, and to the sap and vitality of the *root*.

What is true of the member is likewise true of the whole body. The Church of the Lord here on earth has likewise had its days of childhood—a time when, like the individual disciple, it was fed upon milk. To it the new Spirit came like a stormy wind and an earthquake. Then, too, did believers' hearts so largely overflow, that their action at first pointed wholly and exclusively in the direction of piety, although not in the way of *manifesting* so much as in that of *propagating* it. All of them at once became preachers and heralds, who proclaimed by sound of trumpet the joyful message to the world; and in this occupation they spent almost the whole of their days. The entire life of the old heathen world, with whatever elements of truth or falsehood it contained, lay before them like a Canaanitish land. It was no

[1] John, i. 9.

time for truce or treaty of peace. On the contrary, "*Root up what is an abomination in the sight of the Lord*," was the war-cry with which the spiritual Israel broke into the territory of the enemy. Now, doubtless, that too was a narrow and exclusive Christianity; but yet, at the particular time, how needful was it that the activity which had gushed out of the new faith should, in its turn, make the confirmation and settlement of the faith its sole business, in order at the first to foster the power from which all the other gifts and energies of this life were to receive their consecration! Woe to him who should then have attempted to pour the water of cool reflection upon the fire of joyful enthusiasm! At that time also it would have been wrong to wipe away with too hasty a hand the morning dew from the flower which it was destined to foster and strengthen. The sun, however, ascended higher into the heavens; the Christian Church speedily attained to manhood; and then likewise the Christian life deposited itself in all the forms which heathenism offered for its use. And as Israel borrowed from the Egyptians their vessels, in order to employ them in the service of the Lord, so, as an ecclesiastical Father says, did the Church appropriate the moulds and vessels in which the life of heathenism had manifested itself, and consecrate them to the truth which came from God. There arose a Christian state, a Christian science, and a Christian art.

Wherever, therefore, it is the overflow of the heart and feelings in the infancy of God's children which causes an exclusive restriction to employments of a religious kind, and a repudiation so complete of whatever is not strictly Christian, no one ought to censure or apply unworthy names to what God Himself has so wisely ordained. "When I was a child," says St Paul, "I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child;" and in saying this, he does not mean to taunt himself for what he had been. The time to taunt and criticise does not begin until the childishness *is carried over into the age of manhood.* Even in that case, however, it is

necessary to draw a distinction between those who, in the practice of piety, direct their attention chiefly to such outward works and employments as prayer-meetings and going to Church, reading books of devotion, religious conversation, especially lecturing and censuring the world, and judging, condemning, and excommunicating others, while there is still a flow of sap in the root from which these shoots and branches spring up; and those, on the other hand, in whom the sap of the root has gradually been dried up, and not till then has the grafting of external employments from without, and the clipping of the shoots and branches commenced. For only in the case of those with whom the root was either dry at the first or was gradually dried up, can it be confidently affirmed that godliness, according to the expression of the apostle, has been turned into a *trade.* Religion is not a thing which may be learned, as one learns to make shoes or a doublet. We cannot say to the learner, "My friend, in so many weeks or months you will master the business, or in two years will become a journeyman." They who learn piety in that way grow up to be dry formalists, who will dispute about the baptismal certificate or the cradle, without thinking for a moment of the child which it contains—scrupulous pedants, who leave seventy lawful things undone in order not to fall into one that is unlawful—men who at the best never commit a fault, but whose whole life is nothing else. Moreover, it also comes about that at last the boundary between pietism and hypocrisy can no longer be discerned. When at every twenty steps upon their way they build a little sacramental chapel, in which, however, there is no sacrament; when several times a-day they ring the bells but have no divine worship; when the duties of public and domestic life which God has assigned to them are neglected, because they are so busy offering oblations to Him that they have no time left;[1] and when, while so negligently fulfilling their own duties, they find leisure enough to criticise without mercy the

[1] Mark, vii. 11, 12.

manner in which their neighbour fulfils his,—that is the pietism which, in strict language, is to be called bad. It is quite another thing when the *heart is present* in all such outward work, and when it is perchance only a scrupulous conscience that impels a man to seek salvation in such stated pious employments. Of this sort were the anxious consciences with which Paul had to do, and which could not be brought to abstain from the ordinances they had inherited from their fathers, and, in particular, refused to eat the flesh of sacrificed animals, being apprehensive that they might thereby be brought into fellowship with the idols to which the flesh had been offered. Now in all cases of this kind it would be most improper to have recourse to club law, for the man who is afraid of his conscience fears in that nothing less than God, and ought therefore to be always treated with respect, even though his groundless scruples may betray him into gross acts of folly. With persons who are weak in this way, how did the apostle Paul himself become weak, and rather than offend their consciences was willing to abstain from eating flesh all the days of his life![1]

But, however that may be, *where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.* As the angel asked the women at the grave, so may we here put the question, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?"[2] The Spirit of the Lord, wherever it is present, submits not to be bound by outward rules, and can as little be held and restrained by dead ordinances. Luther says, "It cannot be affirmed of Christ that lo, He is *here!* or lo, *there!* and neither ought it to be so affirmed of a Christian. And hence no man may confine either Christ or a Christian within certain special rules. The angel said of Him, '*He is not here.*' He has left behind Him on earth the husks of worldly righteousness, of piety, of wisdom, of law, and of everything of the sort. All these He has cast quite away. Do not therefore seek Him in the things which are upon earth, such as fasting, vigils, raiment. In these you will never find Him. They are

[1] 1 Cor. viii. 13. [2] Luke, xxiv. 5.

mere shells." Remark, then, in the first place, that the Spirit of the Lord is far too mighty to admit of His being enclosed within any rules whatever; nor are there any which could possibly comprise all His motions. It is consequently impossible that the collective army of Christians should one and all wear the same uniform. It matters not although the coat, helmet, and boots of every soldier have each a style of their own. Enough that the moment the cry, "*The Philistines are upon thee!*"[1] is heard, they are seen with one unanimous shout flocking to the same banner and fighting for the same cause. Here, too, the truth is that the wind bloweth where it listeth; and as thou canst not tell whence it *cometh*, so just as little canst thou tell *whither it goeth;* which means that no one may presume to place a barrier or erect a palisade in order to determine how far the Spirit is to drive a man. If, however, demagogues take the field, and attempt to subvert all order and laws, the case has been provided for. Because the apostle has likewise taught us what the true fruits of the Spirit are, in the following words: "The fruit of the Spirit is *love*, *joy*, *peace*, *long-suffering*, *gentleness*, *goodness*, *faith*, *meekness*, *temperance*."[2] And where there are none of these, neither certainly is the Spirit there, however great the clamour that is made. On the other hand, wherever such fair and goodly fruits are found, there also does the heart of the Christian comply with all order, discipline, and rule which are consonant with God's Word; saving only that he does not become the slave of any one of them, but says with the apostle Paul, "Though I be free from *all men*, *yet have I made myself servant unto all*, that I might gain the more."[3] I have hands, feet, eyes, ears, and a tongue, and doubtless it behoves that these be subservient to the rule and laudable usages of man. My *heart*, however, is free, and belongs to none but Christ my Lord; and the service which I perform, I perform for no other reason or motive than free faith and free affection. And so it likewise is with all the decent and pious observances of

[1] Judges, xvi. 14-20. [2] Gal. v. 22. [3] 1 Cor. ix. 19.

the Christian life. Public worship I will certainly attend. I will take my seat at the Lord's *Table*, and hold fellowship with those who are my brethren in the faith. In the morning when I rise I will pray to my heavenly Father; at meal-time will give thanks for my daily bread; and in the evening assemble my family for worship. With all my heart will I give up the company of worldly people, their foolish talk, their banquetings and gluttony. If necessity require, I will rather wear a jacket than a dress-coat, and rather live on bread and water than indulge in wine and delicacies. But although, as far as need be, I willingly do these things with my mouth, and hand, and foot, *my heart* must be above them, and retain its freedom, unenslaved by any external work or custom, however laudable or proper. To none must it be in bondage but to Christ, who is my Lord; Him only will I permit to bind or loose my conscience, and when He gives me a dispensation no pope or schoolmaster shall interfere.

> What care I for the *moon's* pale rays,
> When basking in the *sun's* bright blaze?

No one, therefore, must find fault with me if at any time I feel the desire to sing my psalm under the pleasant blue heavens rather than in the church, which at other times is so dear to me; or to read a comedy with men of the world in place of reading my Bible with the pious; or now and then to treat myself to a roast in place of always eating vegetables. It was thus that Luther boldly answered the hypocrites of his day, "If it was right for God to *make* great oxen and fat pikes and good Rhein wine, it cannot be wrong for me to *eat* and *drink* them." Neither has it been recorded in vain that our Lord attended the marriage in Cana, and there did not merely drink water and eat dry bread. At the same time, as we are all aware that "over-security is man's worst foe," it will also be right and needful to reflect that the holy apostle, when exhorting us "to make provision for the flesh," has wisely annexed, "but not to the fulfilling of its lusts;" and that St Peter admonishes us to be "as free, yet not using our liberty

as a cloak of maliciousness, but as the *servants of God.*"[1] Even though I be subject to no outward rule or custom, I must still continue inwardly subject to *God;* and were I to find that such liberty in outward things tended to withdraw my heart from Him, the bondage would again recur, but now it would be to the *fleshly gratification*, as formerly to the spiritual *ordinance;* now to *pleasure*, as formerly to *obligation.* It still continues, however, to be bondage and idolatry, whether thy idol be Baal or Moloch; for it is written, "*Thou shalt serve the Lord thy God, and Him only.*"

Let every man, therefore, prove his own heart, whether, in the free use he makes of the good things of life, he still likewise keeps a clear conscience, so that in the midst of his enjoyment he can heartily pray to God; and in cases where he cannot do that, let him abstain, for it is also written, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient." You may safely bring iron near a fire, but not wax or paper. It seems to me a very instructive story that is told of the pious hermit, Nicholas von der Fluhe. One day he received a visit from a vain fop, very gaudily arrayed, who put to him the question, "Holy brother, what think you of my dress?" to which the pious man replied,—"*If thy heart be good, so also are thy clothes; but if thy heart had been good, thou wouldst scarcely have dressed thyself in clothes like these.*"

All, then, dear Master, that I can do, is to implore of Thee to keep me in the liberty purchased for me by Thy dear life and death, that I may know no other righteousness save that which comes from Thy precious merit, and may seek neither righteousness nor salvation in any outward thing which I either do or leave undone, but solely in this, that my heart cleaves in strong faith to Thee, and imbibes from Thee its strength and its peace. All external statutes and ordinances, and all pious usages, however beautiful they may be, are not beautiful or lofty enough to make me their slave, being as I far more am a servant to *Thee.* Inasmuch, then, dear Lord and Saviour,

[1] 1 Peter, ii. 16.

as I am Thy servant, I will cordially subject myself to all rule and decent custom from free love; for this, as it was done by Thyself, I look upon as being wholly consonant with Thy desire. If, however, I should at any time use my liberty in such a way as to impair the subjection of my heart or the bond of my affection to Thee, be pleased at once to take me under the discipline of Thy Holy Spirit, in order that the liberty, that precious privilege which Thou hast purchased for me, may not be evil spoken of,[1] but that at all times, and in all ways, I may walk worthy of the name of a disciple of Jesus Christ. Help me to this by Thy grace.

46.

The Heart is Deceitful.

Thou mournest that whole years are gone
Ere sinners are made saints;
My faith, when told it can be done
IN A WHOLE LIFETIME, *faints.*

For enterprises great, you know,
Are in the execution slow;
And can there be a work so great
AS RUINED SOULS TO RE-CREATE?

If God, as Holy Scripture says,
To make the world took six FULL *days,*
No marvel MANY A YEAR *should fleet,*
Ere the new birth is found complete.

JER. xvii. 9. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

PSALM xxv. 5. "Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me: for Thou art the God of my salvation; on Thee do I wait all the day."

[1] Rom. xiv. 16.

Ecclus. ii. 2. "Set thy heart aright upon God, and constantly endure."

IT is certainly disheartening to observe that even when, as the effect of faith, the Sun of righteousness has risen upon a human heart, the rays penetrate so slowly and gradually into all its depths and corners. It does indeed require a long time to fill a man so thoroughly full of light "as to have no part dark,"[1] either in his head or in his heart. We cannot contemplate any of the stations or relationships in which we stand towards others with a *perfectly* clear and unclouded eye. The deceitfulness of sin mingles in the view we take of them all. Of this, however, we are not aware so long as such relationship lasts. Just as objects to which we are too near seem, when we inspect them, confused, and are seen in their true light only when viewed from a distance; so must every relationship in which a Christian has been living lie a considerable way behind ere he can possibly appreciate the power exerted by self-deception over him, even in the commonest situations. I am astonished at the vast confidence which many entertain that they see all things in the right light and do all things in the right way. It seems to me that experience should have taught every one rather to take for granted beforehand that, in whatever circumstances he may be placed, he only sees *some things* with a clear and untroubled eye, many things through magnifying or diminishing lenses, but by far the most things through coloured glass. You talk of experience! but until a man has advanced so far in repentance and faith as to have discovered the black peppercorn in the heart, which is the name the Arabians give to *self-love*, he may wander about on every hand and yet experience nothing.

> If thou wouldst have thy compass safely guide thee,
> Look to the *loadstones* that may be beside thee.

What advice, then, is to be given to one who by the help of

[1] Luke, xi. 36.

the Spirit of God has become sensible of the enormous amount of self-deceit which incessantly pursues even the sincere Christian? There are *remedial means and appliances.* But before mentioning them, it must be premised that, in order to learn the immeasurable depth at which the disease is seated, thy soul must be kept in the *proper frame and posture.* Be not too soft and faint-hearted, nor yet too hot and impatient. *Learn by degrees to tolerate thyself.*

> Man's heart is an abyss profound;
> Dig deep if thou wouldst reach the ground;
> And call, when weary with the spade,
> Unflinching patience to thine aid.
> If *God* be pleased with thee to bear,
> Why shouldst thou of *thyself* despair?

This is an admonition which the soul at every new mortifying discovery should take home. As to the remedies, we would say to thee first of all, "Go into thy closet." That is the place in which all the stations and relations in which we stand to those about us, as husbands, wives, friends, superiors, and domestics, ought to be passed in review, and, under a sense of the divine presence, made the subject of special reflection. Many of these have come down to us from the time when we had other masters than Christ, and have not yet been thoroughly reformed. Moreover, if our purpose be to mortify the old Adam, we shall find that in some of them we still give free rein to his wiles, or it may also happen that for lack of watchfulness certain weeds once suppressed have again acquired strength, and are quietly luxuriating. In all such cases a spiritual Passover must be celebrated afresh, and from every corner into which it has crept the old leaven must be purged out by the new leaven of godly sincerity and truth. Let not the question which you put to yourself be simply, Am I a *Christian?* but let it further be, Am I a Christian *father?*—a Christian *friend?*—a Christian *master?*—a Christian *subject?*—and a Christian *man of business?* Now, to ascertain all this you will require a mirror, and the mirror is the Word of

God, which holds up to us noble patterns and portraits of every description. Thus the *boy* may ask himself, Am I a Christian child like Jesus, who was in all things subject to His parents, and increased in wisdom and favour with God and man?[1] The *youth* may inquire, Am I a Christian youth like Timothy, fleeing youthful lusts, and following after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and meekness?[2] So too the *man:* Am I a Christian man like Paul, and can I, like him, say that I have laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me?[3] In like manner may the *grey-haired veteran* ask himself, Am I, in my old age, like Simeon, who could not depart in peace until his eyes had seen the Saviour?[4] Or the *father:* Am I Christian father, never provoking my children to wrath, but, according to the apostle's exhortation, bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?[5] And so likewise the *mother:* Am I a Christian mother, such as the pious Eunice, who taught her son Timothy from a child the Holy Scriptures?[6] And so too may the Christian *master* put to himself the question, Do I walk from morning to night in my household as one who knows that I have a Master in heaven with whom there is no respect of persons?[7] The Scriptures are thus full of holy types and patterns; and yet there is nothing which humbles us more than the daily and attentive contemplation of the holy Lamb of God. Oh, how marvellous an example is His! adapted alike for male and female, for the little and the great, for men of low and men of high degree. The whole narrative is written for this purpose. It is so high above the ways of men, and yet is so human and so benign. At first it shines like a star, too remote in the heavens for us to reach, and then again it rises like a ruddy dawn in every particular heart; at first, like the blue firmament from afar, it fills the bosom with earnest longings, and then is again transformed into human flesh and blood. Unquestionably

[1] Luke, ii. 52. [2] 1 Tim. vi. 11. [3] 1 Cor. xv. 10.
[4] Luke, ii. 29, 30. [5] Eph. vi. 4. [6] 2 Tim. i. 5; iii. 15.
[7] Eph. vi. 9.

there is no light, either to be found or imagined, which is so rich in grace, and so efficacious in penetrating and dispersing the thick mist of self-delusion, as that which radiates from the image of Jesus Christ.

It may also be salutary to study in private other religious books, and especially the example of pious persons. In particular, a great blessing attaches to *Biographies*. From these we learn how manifold and diverse are the gifts of divine grace, and how rich and abundant the heavenly blessings with which the Lord endows the members of His Church. They likewise show that there are certain *fundamental laws* in the kingdom of God to which every one must subject himself; and teach us in particular to our shame that at all times, and not merely in the apostolical age, those only make their way into the kingdom of heaven who with violence and force *press into it*.[1] But of all that a Christian can read for his edification, and particularly for his growth in self-acquaintance, nothing is so precious as the dealings of God with individual souls, which call aloud to us, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."[2] Only, due attention must be paid to the clause, "*as I am of Christ*," in order that one may still remain our Master, and each of us in his own peculiar way follow Him. Moreover, it is with much reading of religious books as with the supply of oil to a lamp,—care must be taken not to pour too much upon the flame, unless, indeed, we wish to put it out. Rather ought all religious books to be like streamlets, which, as they emanate from the Book of books, guide us back to that great and goodly fountain.

In like manner, many pious Christians have found it conducive to their spiritual welfare to keep a reckoning with themselves in *Diaries;* and doubtless many blessings are connected with the practice. There is nothing for which a human memory is so ill adapted as to retain a constant and lively recollection of the times when the water-floods roared around us, and the pit opened its mouth as if it would swallow us up,

[1] Luke, xvi. 16; Matt. xi. 12. [2] 1 Cor. xi. 1.

and when—to put to shame our despondency—the hand of God was marvellously stretched from heaven to take hold of us, as David, the servant of the Lord, *experienced* "at the time the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies," and as he has thus described it: "He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters."[1] Oh, how forgetful the children of men appear to be of the lessons which they are taught respecting God's fatherly care and wondrous compassion, and the salutary uses of affliction! seeing that, although the Lord has already a hundred times guided our feet through the deep waters, we are yet, in every new emergency, ready to repeat the cry, "Lord, we perish." There can be no doubt, therefore, that it is a forcible discourse which a diary addresses to a man when it presents to his view the numberless occasions on which his soul in its trepidation exclaimed, "I am cut off from before Thine eyes,"[2] and was then afresh compelled to acknowledge with the Psalmist, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning;" or to say with Joachim Neander, in his powerful hymn,—

> "How oft in danger o'er my head
> The eternal God His wings hath spread!"

That itself is a goodly blessing which may be derived from Christian diaries. But another reason for which these books may be commended is, that they serve as a directory how to walk "*circumspectly*, not as fools but as wise,"[3]—that they fix and preserve to all times the blessing of those bright glimpses which the Lord now and then vouchsafes into His mercy and our unfaithfulness, so that when they have been long kept they cry aloud with trumpet-tone to the soul, "*Know that the Lord leadeth His saints in a strange way.*"[4] Notwithstanding, however, diaries have also their attendant dangers. The soul may come at last to reckon up in the Lord's presence the fruits which His grace has allowed to grow in the garden of the heart,

[1] Psalm xviii. 16.
[2] Psalm xxxi. 22.
[3] Eph. v. 15.
[4] Psalm iv. 4—Luther's vers.

and quite forget that there is no other ornament, no courtly robe, in which it can be acceptable in His sight, than the blood and righteousness of Christ. Another, again, may begin to keep a register of the *blossoms* on the tree of his spiritual life—those blissful feelings which the Lord vouchsafes—and to torment himself at the disconsolate hours he has passed, which have probably originated in nothing but bodily languor and infirmity. In short, there is danger of a man *becoming enamoured of himself*, and ceasing to walk before his God in simplicity, like a happy child who has been saved by *grace*.

But of all the ways in which his lines can fall to the child of God who is anxious to be saved from the snares of self-delusion, the most pleasant is when God vouchsafes to him the gift of a *faithful friend*. Such a friend is, indeed, a strong defence, and of this the sages of the olden time were sensible. The wise son of Sirach says, "He who hath found such an one, *hath found a treasure*."[1] Solomon the preacher thus writes: "Two are better than one; for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but *woe to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up*. . . . And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him, and a three-fold cord is not quickly broken."[2] The Lord Himself sent forth His disciples *in pairs;* and St Paul exhorts, "Comfort yourselves together, and edify one another."[3] Oh, how well can a faithful friend *edify* us and promote our welfare, especially when we not only seek the refreshment of his counsel on occasional and transitory emergencies, but when we can take him along with us in testing the matters we have on hand in our everyday life, and can say to him, "You must, as my friend, *strictly* observe my habitual conduct, and never be pleased with aught that is displeasing to Christ the Lord"! How easily the eye of a friend detects what escapes our own, however clear-sighted it may be! for, as the Easterns say, "The sharpest knife does not cut its *own handle*." The whole town may ring with the evil report of some fault we have committed, without ourselves

[1] Ecclus. vi. 14. [2] Eccles. iv. 9-12. [3] 1 Thess. v. 11.

in the least suspecting it. And in such a case, how good it is that even the clamour of *enemies*, so far as it is true, should reach us through the gentle mouth of a friend, and thus teach us a lesson! Yet how often it happens that not even the mouth of a Christian friend dares to speak a word of truth, and pleads such excuses as, "I fear he would take it ill," "I fear it might offend him"! But he who takes offence at the word of truth, or at reproof that comes from the mouth of a friend, has certainly never taken home to himself the reproofs of the *Holy Spirit*. In such a case the *ground* has not yet been thoroughly digged. No; the main point in all Christian friendship unquestionably is, that the parties shall stand on such a footing as to be able affectionately and without fear or anxiety to exercise the office of censors towards each other, firmly assured that they shall reap nothing but brotherly gratitude for their pains.

These are the means of grace by which the deceitfulness of sin is ever more and more exposed to view. If, however, we find that in spite of our honest fight and struggle against it, many a weakness continues to grow rank, and is not overpowered by the new life from God, we may yet in such a case take comfort from the thought that the heavenly Gardener knows His appointed time and hour, and that even foibles of that description will be made to work for good to the soul *that is sincere*. We must just learn to have patience with ourselves. The fact is, as expressed by the Eastern proverb, that "He who will not mount the *ladder* step by step, will never reach the roof of the house." Do not examples such as that of Luther show that foibles of the sort are often so closely connected with the virtues which make one man an abler instrument of good than another, that it must needs be said, "*Let the tares grow together with the wheat until the time of harvest*"? The frailties of one man are left unsubdued for the sake of his brethren, because they hinder the Gospel from shining in him with all its brightness, and thereby adapt him better for ministering to those weak members whose eye is yet unable to bear

the pure light. To another, as in the case of Paul, the thorn in the flesh is left, lest he should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of his gifts.[1] It would seem, indeed, that the infirmities of the Christian serve the same purpose as heather, grass, and weeds, which protect the growth of the tree while it is still weak, but which, when it has attained height and strength, it has power of its own to suppress. No doubt all depends on the stout and earnest resolution *never to look back* after the hand has once been put to the plough.[2] A vigorous attack is half the battle; and where such firm resolution is wanting, the infirmities of which we speak never come to an end. Rather are such irresolute Christians like the weak sorts of grain, which have always weeds and grass growing among them, because they are too feeble to overtop and suppress them. And also thus it is that we see certain Christians of a doubtful hue who have never advanced so far as to renounce obedience to all other masters but the one, and who consequently are all their life long like the slave, who no doubt would fain be free from his chain, because it hurts him, but who would also fain keep hold of it, because it is *of gold*. God grant that in such cases the tares may not grow so rank as at last to choke the wheat! He who aspires to the honour of having the Lord for godfather must bring no bastards to the baptismal font.

Alas! how must he sweat and weep,
At every step, who climbs the steep
And thorny path to heaven!
To reach that high and blest abode
Baffles all strength, save that by God
To prayerful pilgrims given.

Yet He who measured earth and skies,
Has also set by counsel wise
A limit to thy grief;
And come it will, the hour which He
Has chosen as the best for thee,
And bring at last relief.

[1] 2 Cor. xii. 7. [2] Luke, ix. 62.

47.

A just Man falleth and riseth up again.

"Alas! I often fall," I hear thee say.
My child, let not these falls thy heart dismay;
But if the faithful hand thou hold not fast
Which safely guides thee, then thy doom is cast.
His fall made PETER *stronger than before—*
When JUDAS *fell, he fell to rise no more.*

PROV. xxiv. 16. "A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief."

LUKE, xxii. 61, 62. "The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly."

MATT. xxvii. 3, 4. "Then Judas, which had betrayed Him, when he saw that He was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood."

IF in the life of the Christian the sun is often clothed in sackcloth, and his path lies through storm and rain, the sacred Scriptures nevertheless present us with striking instances that even our falls do not put us to shame, provided that we can contrive to rise again; and that it is to the sickliest of His children that the faithful and affectionate hand of their Lord and Master is specially held out. How many have fallen, and from the *example of Peter* have gained strength to rise again! It is a great mercy that God has in the sacred Scriptures recorded this example for our use!

He whose temperament is like Peter's—soft in the morning and hard at night, all fire to-day and all frost to-morrow—is the readiest to despair of the Lord's ability to rear out of such

material a fabric to His glory. And yet it was to this apostle, and to no other, that the Lord addressed the words, "Thou art Peter,[1] and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."[2] We are astonished, but our astonishment would probably not be quite as great if we knew how poor and uncouth were the building materials which the Lord had at His disposal in the hearts of the other disciples. How weak they were in the faculty of *intelligence*, how greatly they misunderstood His plainest sayings, are facts of which manifold striking instances are mentioned.[3] Doubtless, also, in their hearts there was much, very much, for divine grace to purge away; as, for example, the incredulity of a Thomas,[4] and the intemperate zeal of a John.[5] One thing, however, they possessed—they were *children*, and out of children something may be made, for they submit to be trained; and therefore, great although their poverty was, the Lord was confident of success, and rejoiced in spirit, and said, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."[6]

It has not unfrequently happened to me to hear a person say, that he could not conceive how one who, like Peter, had affirmed, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God,"—could afterwards deny his Master, and *say*, *with an oath*, "I know not the man." Of that I am not so sure, for

> Wind and weather overnight,
> Full many a tender flower may blight.

No doubt the man who has once fallen is attacked by the whole world; but, after all, does not all depend upon the single point, what weight a person attaches to *telling a lie?* If the dyke which ought ever to stand erected between the heart

[1] The name signifies rock—John, i. 42. [2] Matt. xvi. 18.
[3] Matt. xvi. 6-9; Luke, xviii. 34; Mark, ix. 10; John, xiv. 8.
[4] John, xi. 16; xx. 25. [5] Luke, ix. 54. [6] Luke, x. 21.

of a Christian and falsehood have been broken down—if, between the truth on one side and the falsehood upon the other the compromise vulgarly termed a *white lie* have been made—and if a lie of that sort glide over the lips as lightly as the word of truth—I do not know whether in the hour of trepidation and danger many who now boast with Peter, "Though all men should be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended,"[1] would not fall as that disciple fell. And even though we might not on that night have fallen like him, how many of us would have stood at his side when, in the face of the judges who had crucified the Lord, he cast the testimony, "We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him"?[2]—how many of us would have stood by his side when he submitted to be beaten with rods, and "departed from the presence of the council rejoicing that he was counted worthy to suffer shame for His name"?[3] When the Saviour was nailed to the cross, Peter was of those who *drew back;*[4] but when it behoved him to verify the words which Jesus had spoken respecting him, saying, "Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me *afterwards*,"[5] he did not draw back, but by *actual deeds* became a witness of the sufferings of Christ,[6] followed in his Master's footsteps even to the ignominious tree, and entered into the fellowship of His cross. How many of us who stand up and reproach him would have followed the Saviour so far? No, Peter! it was no unmeaning word when thou didst say to Jesus, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; *Thou knowest that I love Thee.*"

In what more consolatory way for all of unstable heart who stand with wavering purpose between heaven and earth could

[1] Matt. xxvi. 33. [2] Acts, iv. 19; v. 29-32.
[3] Acts, v. 41. [4] Heb. x. 39. [5] John, xiii. 36. [6] 1 Pet. v. 1.

He, whose strength is made perfect in the weak, have manifested His power? Oh, how often, when I have felt my hands grow weary and my knees faint—when I have staggered with uncertain steps from side to side, and sighed,

> Oh, when will this dim twilight pass away,
> And I an outlet find to perfect day?—

how often has the example of Peter helped the fallen child to regain his feet!

It is true that a long time must have elapsed before, in Peter's case, the cure reached its final stage. We learn that even in after-life, when he had gone forth to preach the name of Christ, not merely did the old Peter still conflict with the new, but that the new was overcome. Paul's account of the matter,[1] no doubt, is by many represented in a far worse light than it deserves. They suppose that the disciple had wholly lost the light of true knowledge, and that he who before, in the council of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, and in the presence of a multitude of believers, had been courageous enough to challenge the zealots of the law, and to say, "Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they,"[2]—had yet publicly disowned the grace of Christ, and preached up the righteousness which comes solely from the law. That, however, was not the case. All he did was, that when the zealots were come from Jerusalem, he abstained from eating in company with the Gentiles, in order not to transgress any longer the legal ordinance; and so did the others who were with him.[3] By acting thus, no doubt, he showed that he feared men more than God, and sinned against his better knowledge. It was for this that his brother Paul reproved him, and that he humbly submitted to the reproof; for although the apostle does not expressly say so in his epistle, such must have been the case,

[1] Gal. ii. 11, 12. [2] Acts, xv. 10, 11. [3] Gal. ii. 12, 13.

seeing that otherwise Paul could not, in addressing the Galatians, have referred to the reproof. Now, no doubt, it is shameful that even in an apostle the fear of man could have so far prevailed over his better knowledge; and this may well awaken sad reflections upon the greatness of human frailty, and induce us with double self-distrust to take home the admonition, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," and to renounce all reliance upon our own strength. On the other hand, however, it likewise furnishes a testimony of some importance to the truth, that in a human heart much grace and not a little frailty may for a time coexist side by side. And such a testimony is fraught with encouragement; for this Peter was the same who on the day of Pentecost laid the foundation-stone of the Christian Church, rejoiced to be beaten with rods for the name of Jesus, and afterwards followed his Master to the cross. Have patience, therefore, with thyself, thou weak-hearted disciple, seeing that God has so much patience with thee.

But how came it to pass that the child who fell so often nevertheless always regained his feet? He did indeed often fall, but *never once did he let go the hand that led him;* and this hand lifted him up. It was no untruthful word when he said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life;" and upon another occasion, "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." Hence was it that every fall brought forth repentant tears, and repentant tears increased affection, as is so charmingly described after his denial. He was still standing by the fire in the court of the high priest when the door of the building at the back opened, and the Saviour came forth from the judgment-seat; the cock then crowed the second time, and "the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter: and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice; and Peter went out, and *wept bitterly*."[1] Sharp, no doubt, was the bitterness of these tears—they

[1] Luke, xxii. 61, 62.

burned like *aqua fortis*, and therefore had power to consume away even the black stain of the denial. Well would it have been for Judas if he could have wept such tears.

Probably when Judas appeared before the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood," there was still time to have had recourse to the friend of sinners. Why then, unhappy man, didst thou go to those cold-hearted hypocrites, who threw back thy money with a "What is that to us? see *thou* to that"? Why didst thou not hasten to Him whose innocent blood thou hadst betrayed? Why didst thou not from the foot of the cross lift up thy hands to Him in supplication? No doubt the arms which used to be extended to every sinner imploring pardon were then nailed to the accursed tree, but for certain He would not have said to thee "see thou to that;" and though He could not have stretched forth His hand, His closing eyes at least would have intimated that thou wert forgiven. In the heart of Judas, however, there was no longer either love or faith. There are some to whom the saying which the meek and gentle Son of God uttered against His betrayer sounds stern and severe: "The Son of Man goeth as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed! it had been good for that man that he had not been born."[1] But have they whom this offends ever cast a look into the night of a human heart in which the *capacity to believe and love* has been extinguished—a heart in which *avarice* has withered up the root of all faith and affection? The hints which Scripture gives explanatory of the black deed of the betrayer are few; but, in my opinion, they are sufficient to enable us to understand the final fall from which he never rose. "Judas was a *thief*, and had the bag, and bare[2] what was put therein;"[3] and when the self-forgetful affection of Mary brings an offering that greatly exceeds her means, the thief comes to her under the mask of a friend of the needy and asks, "Why was

[1] Matt. xxvi. 24.

[2] May also mean "took of what was given."

[3] John, xii. 6.

not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?"[1] These few words seem to me enough to disclose the blackness of the man's heart. If he had ever been the friend of God he could not have been so with more than half a heart; and his case verifies the proverb, that "He who only gives the *half* of his heart to God gives the *whole* of it to the devil." In one respect the *love of money* is worse than every other vice that poisons our frail blood, in that it deadens our liveliest sensibilities, and withers up the soul. He who at the *side of Jesus* could continue to be a thief of money, and of money which was destined *for the poor*—he who *under the eye of Jesus* could feign compassion for the indigent while he was thinking of his own advantage—must have had a frame of mind which can hardly be imagined. Could there have been any communion with God, any sincere prayer to Him? It is impossible. He who played the hypocrite in the sight of Christ was beyond all doubt likewise a hypocrite in the sight of God. If in his heart there had been the slightest susceptibility of love, how could he have resisted *when* He "who knew that He was come from God and went to God" rose from supper to wash the disciples' feet, and knelt even at the feet of a Judas? But the voice of affection could expect no responsive echo from a heart that was dead—dead as the metal to which it had been sold. It is written, that having received the sop, he went immediately out, "*and it was night.*"[2] That night without was but a counterpart of the night within his soul. He had ceased in his daily walk to keep hold of the hand of God, and so when he fell the hand of God did not keep hold of him, and this was the reason why he could not rise from his fall. No doubt it is written that "when he saw that Jesus was condemned to die, he *repented himself;*"[3] but, unlike that of *Peter*, his repentance was *without tears*. It was the repentance of *terror* and not of *sorrow* for sin—the repentance which *fears* the punishment, not that which would gladly have *endured* the penalty, if it could but

[1] John, xii. 5. [2] John, xiii. 30. [3] Matt. xxvii. 3.

have undone the guilt. For this cause he was afraid to face God. Here God's eye had looked out at him from his conscience, and he imagined that in escaping from his conscience he would escape from God's eye.

> Here stood he hid behind the shade,
> There stands in open view displayed;
> And all that once his soul dismayed
> Has with him to the judgment gone.
> Poor man! *self-cheated and undone!*

Thrice wretched is the transgressor to whom there is nothing left but a tearless repentance. Such a repentance preys on a man's flesh and bone, and wastes it like a gangrene, leaving him, when it has spent its force, undone. For certain there is no class of sinners to whom, in passing sentence, divine justice will apply so variable a rule as that of suicides. For is not suicide often, as it were, the last convulsive and involuntary gust of a storm which has been raging for years in the bodily tabernacle? In those cases, however, in which it manifests its true nature, and is the *copestone* to a life-long slavery to *sin*, and where the sinner leaps into the dread abyss because sin has *chased him* over hill and valley, all weary, to the brink, at which the last act of his life is the *greatest of his misdeeds* and he *dies*,—oh! can anything be more horrible than such a suicide as that?

One thing, therefore, O my Father and my God, do I implore of Thee, and it is this—if my weakness be so great that I cannot avoid falling, vouchsafe *repentance* to my heart, and let not my repentance lack *tears*. Behold, I can say with Peter, I know not where else to go, if Thou wilt not receive me. Though I fall ten times a-day, still with Peter I can say, "I know that I love Thee." Fall I may, but never more shall I quit hold of Thy hand; and as I shall not let it go, neither will it suffer me to lie prostrate on the ground, but will lift me up again: and when at last, by all my stumbling, Thou hast humbled me so far that I wholly despair of myself, and from Thy hand alone seek my strength and my comfort, then

doubtless, will the hour at last come in which all my steps will be steady, and my walk be continually upright before Thy face. In Thy mercy vouchsafe to me this boon. Amen.

Judas, when thou hadst sold the *Lord*, and when
Thy deep remorse the council laughed to scorn,
Why didst thou not bethink thee to return
And plead with Christ to save thee, even then?

Ah! at His feet if thou thyself hadst thrown,
Confessed the dreadful crime, and mercy craved;
Love on the bitter cross must have vouchsafed
Such pardon as the tears of Peter won.

'Twas not too late to weep thy guilt away,
If *sorrow* from thy heart for ever gone
Had not resigned its place to fell *dismay*.

Better unborn than to be thus undone!
Thy *kiss of love* had *poison* in its breath,
And even in thy *repentance* there was death.

48.

Abraham against Hope believed in Hope.

Faith's part is TO RECEIVE,
And God to faith has given
All that is His to give
Either in earth or heaven.

LOVE DISTRIBUTES *the gifts*
Which she from faith receives.
Oh what a blest exchange is this
In which the Christian lives!

ROM. iv. 18-22. "Who [Abraham] against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own

> body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness."

ABRAHAM *against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb.* Such is faith. It is believing *in* hope *against* hope. Here below everything Abraham saw forbade him to hope, but looking up to the place whence the promise came, he then saw nothing but the strongest grounds for hoping. About him upon earth the flesh found ample occasion to argue, from all that met his eye, a negative to the divine promise, and clearly to demonstrate that the word of God must be untrue. But he entered into no disputation of the kind, or if this were attempted by the flesh, his faith instantly soared high above it and trustfully took hold of the hand which God stretched forth to him from heaven. Yes, such indeed is faith; it cleaves to the things unseen as if it saw them. This is no doubt a hard lesson to learn; and when we mark how many there are who err in learning it, we might almost be tempted to say with Luther, "The wonder is, not that many miss the way, but rather that any, however few, *find* it; for to the foolish world what else can faith appear but the dream of a drunken man?" As it was not by disputation that faith entered his own mind, so neither is it possible for him who possesses it to impart or explain it by disputation to another. We see with our own eyes when the day has actually dawned, and need no arguments to convince us of the fact. To attempt to explain what *light* is before it has *enlightened* us, is to attempt to see it

before it has shone. Only, however, let faith come forth among men, and it needs merely to show itself in its actings, and without disputation all who are of the truth fall on their knees before it, so undeniably does the fact that there lies a world unrevealed behind the one we see bear witness of itself to the human heart. How gradually the plants which the heavenly Father has taken under His protective care grow and progress through wind and rain! There was once a time when the invisible country, which is the home of faith, seemed to my view far away across the wide ocean, and with thick mists resting upon its shores, but by little and little my soul has become domiciled in it. The apostle tells us that "our conversation is in heaven," and again, that "our life is hid with Christ in God;" and dark and mysterious must these words be to one who is unacquainted with faith; but to him who lives by it they are a simple and unmistakable testimony to the truth. There have been philosophers who doubted whether the material world which moves before our eyes has a real existence, and they were laughed at for doing so; but with much greater reason might a believer laugh at those who doubt the existence of that invisible world in which we live, but which we do not see. Ought we not, however, rather to *weep* for them? It is said of the blind, to whom the visible world is shut out, that they are half a world poorer than those who possess the sense of sight; but of you who are spiritually blind it may truly be averred that you are poorer by a whole world than we. How irresistible is the power which the word of truth acquires, if it have once been firmly apprehended by faith! All created things in the visible world, yea, even our own hearts, may set themselves against it—

> But though the creatures great and small,
> And though this vast terrestrial ball,
> And though my heart itself say No,
> I'll trust Thy word before them all.

No doubt the struggle is always hard when the creatures and the visible world take the field against faith. Paul could

challenge to the conflict tribulation, and distress, and persecution, and famine, and nakedness, and peril, and sword, as if they were all blunt weapons when wielded against faith; and was enabled by faith to exclaim, "Who shall separate us from the love of God?"[1] For as Luther says, "Faith is a lively daring confidence in the mercy of God, so sure that a man would die for it a thousand times. And such confidence in and knowledge of the divine mercy makes him cheerful and bold and happy in his relation to God and all the other creatures." But however severe may be the struggle with the creatures, far worse is that which ensues when a man's own heart and conscience begin to gainsay the divine word. Oh, how hot the fire of tribulation when the conscience awakes to a sense of sin, and when the sinner rushes from the approach of God as if he would fly through a hundred worlds! When God's Word has told me that I have experienced His mercy through Christ, and have been by grace made an heir of eternal glory, and when my heart begins to complain that it sees and feels only the contrary of all this, then more than in any other temptation do I become rightly conscious how keen is the heat of the battle. And yet at last God's Word through faith remains master of the field, and to it the trembling heart and conscience must needs surrender; for it is not the sense of sight or taste that is here concerned—not what thou seest with thine eye or feelest in thy heart—but solely that which stands written in the heart of God, and is re-echoed in His Word,—viz., that without doubt thou art now by grace, and shalt eternally continue to be, His child. Yes, verily faith can do far greater things than "*remove mountains*." *It can lull to peace the clamours of conscience.* On all this my mind is now made up; and they who marvel how so poor a child as I am yet so happy, while like others I pursue my way in great infirmity and manifold afflictions, must just be suffered to marvel on at what is the effect of faith.

"*He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief;*

[1] Rom. viii. 35.

but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was able also to perform." Here it is written that he became strong in faith; and a blessed experience it is when, exerting its influence through the Holy Spirit, faith enables a man who by nature is shy, weak, and inconstant, to marshal his energies, as a general does his troops, beneath the banner inscribed with *Christ, and only He*, and engages them to serve in no other cause than His. His war-cry then becomes: "I have but one passion, and it is He." Of all who have received the pardon of sin, is there one who any longer complains of being weak? No; for they have a Captain to lead them on "who giveth power to the faint; and to them who have no might increased strength."[1] And how can faith possibly fail to give strength? In making me one with Christ, it makes that which is His to be also mine, and the whole world subservient to my will. It is related of a holy man, and he one on whom the light of the Gospel had never shone, that being asked the question—

> "Tell me how comes it, friend, that thee
> So happy all day long we see?"

He answered—

> "What else than happy can I be? for know
> That just as I would have them all things go;
> And whether earth or heaven my eye surveys,
> I nothing see but what my will obeys.
> For when God stooped in love to be my Friend,
> I in return my will to His resigned;
> But He forthwith gave back the boon again,
> And said, 'Why should thy lot and mine be twain?'
> So from that hour no questions ever rise
> 'Twixt Him and me of what is mine or His."

"All is yours," saith the apostle; "and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."[2] Yes; to him who through faith has become Christ's, and through Christ God's, there is nothing in heaven or earth but must minister for good. Believers are the true freemen; and if power be always the accompaniment of

[1] Isa. xl. 29. [2] 1 Cor. iii. 23.

liberty, how can it fail to belong to those whom Christ has made free? Thus it was that Abraham was made strong by his faith. He stood childless beside his wife when he counted the stars in the heaven, and the word of God said to him, "So shall thy seed be."[1] But so strong did he become by faith, that even then he beheld around him in thousands and millions the seed of his spiritual offspring who through him were to receive the blessing.

And in that he believed, the patriarch *gave God the glory*. What greater glory can man give *to himself* than what he gives by believing? Is not faith the hand which he stretches out, and in which God places all celestial things? It is the rainbow which connects heaven with earth—the Jacob's ladder on which the angels ascend and descend. We repeat, how can a man give greater glory to himself than by *believing?* or how can he lower himself more deeply than when he contemns faith, and thereby makes himself nothing but a poor worm of the dust? Moreover, on the other hand, how great the honour which he gives to God by his faith! If it be by the confidence we repose in them that we honour *men*, far more must we honour *God* when we accredit him with the ability to do things so much greater than our blind reason ever imagined. No true love can coexist with distrust; so that there can be no love at all without faith: and if distrust be the symptom of a heart unreconciled, so likewise is faith the bond and cement which reconciles God and man, and knits them to each other. For this reason no anthem sounds so beautiful in the ear of God, and no incense sheds so sweet a fragrance before His throne, as faith when it is the oblation made from a childlike heart.

"*And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.*" Can any one still wonder that God was pleased above measure with such a faith as Abraham's? Is not faith a work more excellent than every other? Were it not to be too bold, one might say, in the language of the old teachers of piety, that

[1] Gen. xv. 5.

by it a man is thoroughly *deified.* For as water when heated by fire is no longer mere water, but water and fire combined, so is it with the soul of man when by faith it accepts and appropriates all that belongs to the diving Being. For this reason St Paul says, "It is no more I that live, but Christ that liveth in me." In this way it is that the believer grows up into heaven. Though he still sojourns here on earth, his life is hidden with Christ in God; for such is the language in which the apostle describes the mystery of the marriage of the soul with God through faith.

My Lord and my God, how high the honour Thou hast conferred upon me in making me, by faith, a partaker of all Thy good things, and enabling me to live with Thee in heaven, even while sojourning here on earth! Never more will I despise that precious boon; but as Thou hast judged me worthy of it, I, on my part, will honour Thee, and present to Thee the oblation of that incense which Thou lovest best, and which is a strong faith out of a childlike heart. This will I do at all times: in the morning when I rise, and in the evening when I lay me down; in the night of temptation, and likewise also, if it must be, in the bitter conflict of death. So help me by Thy grace to do. Amen.

49.

The Faith availeth which worketh by Love.

Of faith you have a low esteem
As of some poor and hapless wight.
Not such true faith; but if you deem
Your own is such, no doubt you're right.

Gal. v. 6. "In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."

HOW could the question, Whether faith be a motive power, have ever been made a subject of controversy? For many a year every day and every hour has strengthened my conviction that what a man believes, and what he does *not* believe, is either the lever or the bar to all that he does. *If I believe* what by his pale cheek, as well as by word of mouth, the messenger announces—that sentence of death has been pronounced against me, and that to-morrow's dawn will shine upon my scaffold; if I *believe* the intelligent architect when he assures me that the beams which support the roof of my chamber must, in a few hours, give way; if I *believe* the smooth tongue which whispers that my friend is a villain, and that my wife has been unfaithful,—is it possible that these things should not prove to me a spur and goad? Were faith, indeed, a mere imagination, and did it signify nothing but the presentation to the mind's eye of so many possibilities and shadowy images of beauty, it might be otherwise. For if it be only his drunken fancy that paints to a man a blazing fire or a sultry sun, it may easily happen that his teeth will still chatter with cold. But faith is no such baseless picture drawn by the imagination. It is a piece of myself, and what we believe penetrates through secret and unexplored passages into the deepest recesses of our being. It cannot therefore be otherwise, than that *a man's life is the reflex of his faith.* If thou believest nothing to be real but the fleeting and transitory fabric compacted together of the four elements, then of these elements thy life is nothing but the shadow. If, however, thou believest in the breath of another world, which has here below wrapped itself in inert matter as in a robe, then will *that* breath become the soul of thy life.

Yes, I can with truth proclaim aloud to the world that faith in the Gospel is a motive power, and that in him by whom it is possessed it generates an active love. Yes, O Love eternal, to Thy praise I can testify, that when the Gospel is regularly transfused by faith into a human heart, it acts like food, which, if rightly chewed, unites with the flesh and blood, and from

day to day recruits the body. It is a fire which quickens the pulse, originates new desires, and renovates the whole man. Whether others of the race possess hearts like mine, I cannot tell; but this I know, that when I used to probe my heart to the bottom, I found it so satisfied and enamoured of itself that it was not easy for me to love my neighbour for any other reason than because, and in as far as, he contributed to the increase or enrichment of my personal welfare; and provided I was myself contented, I would have allowed all others to go their own way, whether it were good or bad. Even then I still imagined that I was loving my neighbours, whereas, in all of them, I was only loving *myself*. But thou, O holy Love, hast instructed me in the art of loving, in that Thou didst not look upon Thine own things, but although Thou wert rich, didst for our sakes become poor, that we through Thy poverty might be rich.[1] Such is the love which is taught by faith; and ever since I learned it, O crucified Saviour, on no day dost Thou ever pass me by without, like a good husbandman, sowing a few more seeds of affection in my selfish heart.

Any other love to be found elsewhere in life is, for the most part, and to speak correctly, of a *sickly* sort. Only that which we learn in the school of Christ can be characterised as *healthy*. And the reason is, first of all, that in loving it can actually *forget itself*. Of a truth it is no vulgar merit, but lofty praise, which the Lord ascribes to that kind of almsgiving in which the left hand does not know what the right hand doeth, and whose only witness is the eye *which seeth in secret*. There may not be many among us who are so fond of themselves as to hang out their good deeds, like gold-embroidered brocades, at every window, in order to earn, as their selling price, the applause of the multitude. But are there many who do not desire to have at least one spectator of the good they do, and that one *himself*? Where are to be found those noble souls who, in the sphere they occupy, act like the sun, which every morning ascends the heavens and scatters its gold on the right

[1] 2 Cor. viii. 9.

hand and on the left, on the heights and in the valleys, and are unconscious of what they do—those noble souls who, impelled by an inward exigence, here renovate and there adorn, and heal and bless wherever they appear, like light which can do nothing else than shine? In none but one has the pattern of a love so lofty and so perfectly pure appeared, and it is only faith in Him which can inspire the love which is wholly *forgetful of itself.*

> The soul by faith impelled with all her might
> Plies her allotted task from morn till night;
> But when at length the fabric which she rears,
> Complete in its full loveliness appears,
> Of all spectators she is just the one
> Who least can tell us how the work was done.

No doubt there is a *natural* love, which also does its work in blessed self-oblivion; such, for instance, is that of the mother for her babe. A mother's love is capable of forgetting itself in the being upon which it is lavished. It is not, however, for that reason pure; for just because it is the offspring of nature, it can go so far as to forget God as well as self in its object, and make of that an idol. In condemnation of this Luther says, that "in divine things a father ought to forget that his child is his own flesh and blood." The love, however, which is the offspring of faith is also *wise.* It loves, and seeks to love the creature in the way in which the creature is loved by God; and accordingly, what it loves in man is not merely the part which blossoms to-day and is swept away by the storm of time to-morrow,—it loves what eternity is powerless to destroy—the inward jewel, the royal imprint which God has stamped upon the human soul in making it after His own likeness. Moreover, love, which springs from faith, returns to faith again. It knows for itself no higher good, and knows likewise of no better boon to bestow on others than itself. No doubt there are tender souls who would willingly be helpful to their fellow-men, and who look around on every side for any good they can do to them: and other souls there are also

whose eyes glisten with tears of sympathy the moment they see the eyes of others bedewed with the tears of suffering, and who, just as we instinctively stretch forth a hand to arrest a *falling* body, extend theirs to help a brother whom they see bending beneath his burdens. Would only that such tender souls knew what is the heaviest of all the burdens which men have to bear—that burden from which relief would make every other light as an air-ball, and which consists in the misery of a heart destitute of faith! The labour and the pains which they take to set again upon his feet the unfortunate who has broken down are thrown away; just as if one were to spend a world of toil and trouble in reefing the sails and stopping the leaks of a vessel labouring in a storm, but without observing that it had lost the *helm*. Here also we may say:—

> Let the breeze blow fair,
> Swell all the sails, and in the air
> The streamers gaily float. 'Tis all in vain!
> Unless the *rudder* it regain,
> The bark will founder.

Yes,—to the human soul *faith* is what the helm is to the ship; and so long as the effort to implant it in the heart is unsuccessful, there can be no radical cure for suffering humanity. The apostle affirms that "godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come;"[1] and if so, how can there be a flourishing state of temporal affairs where godliness has not taught energy and moderation, chastity, contentment, and rectitude?

The very first acting of the faith which worketh by love must therefore of necessity be the desire to implant faith in afflicted souls. No doubt here care must needs be taken not to attempt by mere preaching to relieve ourselves from the much more difficult duty of practical and self-denying charity. There are pious cheats who are fonder of opening their mouths for religious talk than their hands for charitable gifts, and who would much rather minister to a patient on a sick-bed some

[1] 1 Tim. iv. 8.

sentences of prayer than some nights of watching; and if, perchance, a neighbour have broken his leg, would rather sing to him a psalm than send for a surgeon and pay his fee. We no doubt often forget, also, that there is a way of preaching *without words*, of which St Peter speaks when he says, that "if any obey not the word, they also may *without the word* be won by the conversation of the wife."[1] The testimony which we bear to Christ in the circle of relatives and acquaintances ought properly never to be anything else than an *explanation* of the reasons of our conduct in cases where that is desired. Oh how greatly do they err who imagine that by constantly-repeated exhortations they can awaken faith in those who are destitute of it! Without the right hammer, you will strike no sound from the bell, and loud crying will not answer the purpose. Unquestionably, however, the right hammer is the testimony of the Spirit of God in our own walk and conversation, consisting in incorruptible rectitude, unpretending modesty, cheerful and willing self-denial, and continual readiness to minister to others. That was the way in which our Lord Himself preached; and, O pattern of all love, that is the example Thou hast left to show us how to preach Thy Gospel. Never did Thy hand minister the manna of heaven but when Thy love was at the same time wiping away the tears of earth. We do not often figure to ourselves, in the light in which the evangelists show it, how great was the self-denying love exercised by our Lord in His daily walk, and how continually He was encompassed by crowds who, side by side with their spiritual misery, exposed to view every sort and shape of bodily wretchedness. Around Him congregated the blind, the lame, the epileptic, the possessed, the victims of paralysis and leprosy. Often they so overpowered Him, that for the livelong day He could find no time to take food;[2] often they thronged around Him in such multitudes upon the land, that He was compelled to enter into a ship.[3] Wherever He came, the sick from all the surrounding districts were brought upon beds and laid on the

[1] 1 Pet. iii. 1. [2] Mark, iii. 20. [3] Mark, iv. 1.

streets for Him to heal.[1] And as He loved far more intensely than any of us, how must the spiritual misery also of these multitudes have gone to His heart? We read upon one occasion that "He came out and saw much people, and was moved with compassion towards them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd;"[2] and upon another, that He cried out, "O faithless generation, how long shall I bear with you? how long shall I suffer you?"[3] Seldom, as I think, does it happen to one of us to shed tears on account of the sins of the world; and yet Jesus the Son of God wept, and wept for His people's sins.[4] Nay, even over the common thorns of misery which beset the life of man on earth He shed tears, as He did at the grave of Lazarus; for on that occasion, when He saw the rest weeping, He too was troubled and wept.[5]

It was thus that Jesus preached by works, and it is to such preaching by charitable deeds that we are everywhere exhorted in the holy Scriptures. True it is that Christian charity is most deeply affected by the spiritual misery of our fellow-men, because that is the source from which all other kinds of misery flow, or at least by which they are aggravated. When not permitted, however, to stop the spring, it seeks at least to drain off and dry up the stream; and great is the worth attributed to the manifestations of it towards the victims of bodily affliction. In one place the Scriptures exhort us "to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."[6] In another: "So is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."[7] And again: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."[8] Works of history inform us that in the early days of Christianity nothing surprised the heathen so much as the charity shown by the Christians to each other. A father of the Church relates that it was a common exclamation, "*See*

[1] Mark, vi. 56. [2] Mark, vi. 34. [3] Mark, ix. 19. [4] Luke, xix. 41.
[5] John, xi. 33. [6] Heb. xiii. 16. [7] 1 Pet. ii. 15. [8] James, i. 27.

how they love one another!" On the occasion of a great public calamity which happened during the third century, a certain bishop, Dionysius, writes as follows: "After a breathing-time of short duration, which both they and we enjoyed, we were smitten with the plague, of all dreadful things the most dreadful to the heathen, but which to us was a special trial and exercise of faith. A vast number of our brethren, out of affection for their friends and neighbours, did not spare themselves in their attentions to the sick, but, unmindful of the danger, visited them, perseveringly waited upon and ministered to them in Christ, and at last were happy to die along with them. Many lost their lives in the room of those who, by their care, had been restored to health. In this way the worthiest of the brethren, some of them presbyters and deacons, others approved men among the laity, made their exit from the world by a death which, as it proceeded from ardent piety and strong faith, seems in no degree inferior to martyrdom. Some also, who after closing the mouth and eyes of their dying brethren, had carried them away upon their shoulders, washed their bodies, and wrapped them in their shrouds, themselves experienced ere long the same fate. Totally different was the conduct of the heathen. They drove out the sick on the appearance of the first symptom of infection, abandoned their dearest friends, cast them, when half dead, upon the street, from apprehension of the spread of the fatal distemper, and yet, by all their endeavours, could not escape its attacks."

Jesus, my Lord and Master, the unspeakable mercy which God has vouchsafed to me through Thee I will accept with the hand of faith, and still accept afresh, that it may bring forth the fruit of charity. Grace has healed the wound of my sin, and will in time wipe away from my eyes all the tears of temporal affliction and misery. I will therefore walk in love, and wherever I can in the world, will heal sin's wounds and dry affliction's tears. Thy holy pattern will I receive into my heart, and it shall be my pleasure, as it was Thine, to visit the abodes of penury and suffering. Only make me wholly Thine

own, and then will charity flow out from me, as the stream does from the fountain. Vouchsafe to me the tranquil blessedness which flows from a sense of the mercy Thou hast won for me; for this opens the heart, and imparts to it sympathy with all human woe. A heart which grace has softened can never remain unaffected at the sight of a brother's tears. Oh that I were but a branch of that vine of which Thou art the stock! for then, weak although I be, I likewise would bring forth the same fruits as Thou didst bear. Oh that I could dismiss all other masters, and look continually to Thee with an eye ever less and less turned away! Thou, and Thou alone, art my master. Oh grant me to avert my view still more and more from what other men do or leave undone, and take what was done or left undone *by Thee* for my sole and perpetual pattern!

Let me, while through life I wander,
Daily the great question ponder,
 If within me reigns the Lord?
Do I seek from Him salvation?
Shunning every aberration—
 Do I follow at His word?

Near to Jesus am I living;
From Him, as a branch, receiving
 Of His grace a rich supply?
When my heart with care is sinking,
From its burden weakly shrinking,
 Do I to *His* bosom fly?

Am I in no duty failing?
Does no indolence, prevailing,
 Draw my heart from God away?
If His precepts I have broken,
Does a voice, within me spoken,
 Mourn that I so often stray?

Is the Saviour all things to me?
Does earth's turmoil never woo me
 From the calm felicity
Found in Him alone; and ever
Do I earnestly endeavour,
 His, and only His, to be?

50.

Charity is the best of the Graces.

Love is a river, and God's heart the source,
Whence into holy souls it ever flows,
Nor tarries long, but in an onward course
Is sped from soul to soul without repose:
Therefore is love, both RICH *and* POOR *always,*
A SPENDTHRIFT *and a* BEGGAR *all its days.*

1 Cor. xiii. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall

I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

WHO *has a mind so lofty, or faculties so noble, as to be able to say what love is?* If I call it dew, I describe only its refreshing power; if a star, only its amenity. If I call it a storm, all that I intimate is its impatience of control; or if a sunbeam, the secrecy of its action. If I say that it is the breath of the soul, elaborated in its inmost workshop, when the spirit from on high combines with the heart's blood of the regenerate man, I do not even then hit the mark, for I have only said what it is in itself apart, not what it is to others. If I call it the solar light, giving life and colour to the things on which it shines, I still come short of the truth, for I only affirm what it is to others, not what it is in itself. If I say that it is the ray of seven colours in the pure water-drop when permeated by the sun, not even then do I define the true nature of love, because it is not so much a thing which can be seen as a secret *perfume and taste* in the innermost chamber of the human heart. Oh, who has a mind so lofty, and thoughts so deep, as to be able to say what love is?

Scripture speaks of it as a *flame of the Lord;*[1] and so it is —a flame tranquil and bright and pure, which first thoroughly cleanses, illumines, and warms the heart into which it enters, and then overflows into all other hearts, burning with all the greater strength and brightness the more of such hearts it kindles and warms and illumines. It is indeed a mystery; for what can be more mysterious than that a man cannot be truly happy who tries to be so only *in himself*, and can be truly happy in himself only when he recovers himself in *others*— that he can be, and continue being, as much at home in another as if that other were not another, and only fully enjoys himself when he has another self to do it with? Take love away, and oh, how every creature stands so solitary and iso-

[1] Song of Solomon, viii. 6—Luther's vers.

lated in the world! how dumb and silent they all are, and how dull the sound which comes down from heaven to earth, and echoes through the whole creation! As it is only love which causes the inward flux and motion of the creatures towards each other, so is love also a lively and expressive tone in each one of them; and were all the beings whom God has created to respond to each other in such a tone of love, who could describe the charming harmonies?

Truly, then, does the apostle, in the lofty hymn which he here indites to Charity, affirm that though a person were to possess all knowledge and all faith, yet if destitute of love he would become as brass, which emits only *a hollow bray*, or at the best as a tinkling *cymbal*, which no doubt gives forth a sound, but a sound in which *there is no soul.* For supposing it possible for a man to be destitute of charity, and yet, as the apostle says, to possess the gift of prophecy, and to understand all mysteries, and to have a faith capable of removing mountains, and to bestow all his goods to feed the poor, still such admirable virtue would but resemble a beautiful countenance bespread with the paleness of death, but from which the spirit had departed.

Inasmuch, then, as it is love which conjoins man with God and God with man, through an inward and blissful motion of the heart, it cannot be but that the person who has thus become conjoint with the divine Being will henceforth make God his only object of desire. And inasmuch as God, being, as He is, love, and desiring also on His part to have an abode in *other beings*, has opened His heart to all His creatures, and allows the goodness and beauty which He Himself possesses to flow out upon them in such measure as their capacities enable them to receive, so likewise does the heart of him who has experienced the love of God stand ever open with thoughts of loving-kindness towards his fellow-creatures, and allow all that has flowed in from God upon himself to flow out upon them. As the solar ray in a clear and silvery drop of water is refracted into seven colours, so is it with love in a pure heart. It, too,

is split into many more than seven kinds of virtue. Rather might it be affirmed that all virtues proceed from it alone, according to the saying of Luther, that "the commandment to love is a short and a long one, a singular and a plural one, no commandment at all, and yet the sum of all commandments." It annuls and yet establishes the whole of them, and hence the apostle says that "love is the fulfilling of the law." [1]

And so here the apostle, in quite an inimitable style, paints to us a grand and richly-coloured picture, showing how Christian charity develops itself in a pure and pious heart. "*It suffers long and is kind*," he says, inasmuch as it causes some measure of the long-suffering and loving-kindness which itself has experienced from God to flow out upon all sinners; and hence goes forth even among those who are strangers to Him, not with the stern zeal of the preacher in the wilderness, announcing that the axe has been already laid to the root of the trees, but with the gentle earnestness of the Saviour seeking that which is lost.

Charity envieth not, just as the God of mercy has not envied us, but day by day offers Himself to us, with all the wealth and blessedness which He enjoys. Even in cases where she might perhaps imagine that His gifts are too lavishly squandered upon those who do not so much as thank Him for them, she does not envy, but is content to think that a day will come when their eyes will be opened.

Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. The God of mercy might well have dealt proudly with miserable creatures like us, but He rather chose to sojourn amongst us in the humble guise of a servant, and in this deep abasement condescended to the meanest and most wretched; and hence, however high the gifts she has received, Christian charity is at all times glad to stoop to persons of however low degree.

Nor doth it behave itself unseemly, which means that it never forgets what is due to others. Rather would it impart to them any good thing of its own than fail to recognise the gifts that

[1] Rom. xiii. 10.

they themselves have received. Hence it is also genuine *courtesy*, and teaches that propriety which is ever mindful of the respect justly claimed by the rank, the talents, and the virtues of a neighbour.

She seeketh not her own, just as her God and Master sought not His own when He came into this poor world; and she bears inscribed as a motto upon all she does: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."[1]

Charity is not easily provoked, and thinketh no evil. Even though all her sweets be recompensed with bitters, never is she herself embittered, and if she bears any grudge at all, it is not at the sinner but at the sin. His sin, were it possible, she would mortify, but not himself. Rather would it give her heartfelt pleasure to see her worst enemies receive crowns and sceptres, honours and estates, and anything else, if by such tokens of the divine long-suffering, their hearts could be inclined towards that which is good.

Charity *rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.* Herself richly filled with the light shed down from above, and in which all equity and truth among men have their source, fain would she diffuse in every quarter the measure of it which she herself has received, and experiences a childlike joy wherever she finds a trace of it, just as the Lord Jesus rejoiced at the faith of the Canaanitish woman and of the centurion of Capernaum. So thoroughly, too, is her eye illumined with the light, that she not only knows right well how to separate the darkness from it, but even discovers in the darkness here and there a ray which a dimmer eye would never have perceived.

Charity *beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.* This means, that as it is her desire to bestow upon a neighbour only what is truly good, so likewise has she the power and ability to do these things wherever it appears needful and wholesome. In short, charity makes the lover and the loved to be one person, and how then can it fail to be the fulfilment of that law which enjoins, "All things whatsoever ye

[1] Acts, xx. 35.

would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them"?[1] Just as there is no husband, at least in the marriages upon which God has pronounced His blessing, who does not consider as done to himself whatever he does to his wife, she being flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone; so likewise does the man who has been fully imbued with the love of God behold in all that is human his own flesh and bone, and labours and provides for it as if he did all for himself.

The apostle tells us respecting faith, hope, and charity, that *of the three, charity is the greatest;* and assigns as the reason, that it will still abide on the other side of the bourne at which faith and hope depart. The secrets of the kingdom of heaven are now beheld by us only as if in the dim reflection of a dark mirror. We know them only in part, and it is solely by faith that we become assured of them. But the holy apostle promises that a day is coming when we shall know God face to face, as we are known of Him, and shall know at the same time the origin and nature of all things, and so there must then be an end of faith. On the other hand, the holy Scriptures apply the name of *hope* to faith when it points to the things of the future, and especially to what we ourselves shall then be; and consequently, when all becomes present, and time itself dissolves into eternity, hope too shall expire. Charity, however, being the door through which God here influences the human heart, and by which man enters into union with the Author of his being and with all created things, never perisheth. For though in this poor sphere of time that door was but as a little wicket, and did not even stand always open, but was too often closed by gusts of wind, in eternity the little wicket shall become a mighty portal, whose folds shall stand ajar night and day, never more to be closed by any gust of wind, and through which the soul shall have free entrance into the heart of her God and of the whole creation. Oh, if, even in this life, love, although it is but a little brook beneath the sultry rays of the sun, often threatening almost to run dry,

[1] Matt. vii. 12.

makes us so rich, how rich will it make us when the brook shall have become a river—nay, even an ocean—and when in full flood it shall flow down from the heart of God, and no more find in the heart of a single creature a sin to obstruct it, and when a free and blessed interchange of gifts shall be established between heaven and earth, and all that are in them? *Oh, who possesses such powers of thought as to be able to tell us what love is?*

The frame of nature in fresh beauty stood—
Hill, valley, man and beast, and stream and wood;
Here the great ocean rolled its billows hoary;
There reared the azure sky its vault of glory;
Sun, moon, and stars their radiant course pursued
Alone, for none the other understood.

A *single* tone was to each creature given
To laud the great Creator, Lord of heaven.
Lit was *one* little flame, to be a sign
That all His works should prove for prayer a shrine;
But to each other strange were flame and tone—
They shone, they sang, each for itself alone.

Oh yes, the earth adorned by God was fair,
But one thing lacked—alas! no *joy* was there.
Feeble and dim the little flames ascend;
Sad are the tones, and soon in silence end.
The children's hearts all for the Father yearn,
Yet none a brother in the throng discern.

The myriad tones arise to heaven on high,
Yet here on earth is heard no harmony;
With incense fires a thousand altars blaze,
And yet no Church's hymns the Maker praise:—
Yes, earth by God adorned indeed was fair,
But one thing lacked—alas!—*no joy was there.*

At last came *love*, and *joy*, her sister, with her,
And in sweet concord blend the tones together.
To form communities the creatures join;
In one vast Church the altars all combine.
Broke was the spell that once the children bound,
When in the Father's heart their common home they found.

51.

Your Body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost.

I've sold myself to Him,
Soul, body, every limb;
Nor ask I from that hour
Either what's sweet or sour.
I only ask, WHAT WILT THOU, LORD?
And instantly, with one accord,
My members all fulfil His word.

1 JOHN, ii. 16. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

MATT. v. 28. "I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

EPH. v. 3-5. "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."

1 COR. vi. 18-20. "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

WHAT a serious sermon against all defilement of the flesh resounds from sacred Scripture! How it dignifies man by teaching him to look upon his body as a temple of

God, a habitation of the Holy Spirit; and even because so great a monarch is enthroned in it, to keep holy the outward fabric! To Christianity is due the first effectual introduction into human life of the noble virtues of chastity in deed and word, temperance and modesty.

The Gospel has not extirpated the instinct of nature, but has consecrated it, as it does all that is natural. The Almighty Maker of heaven and earth Himself brought his wife to Adam, and declared that "they twain were to be one flesh;"[1] and thus, as Luther says, "the conjugal instinct has *been enclosed in a divine word*, as in a holy *monstranz;*" and that divine word, which the Jews had wellnigh forgotten, was by Jesus Christ brought again to light and inserted in His Gospel.[2] The Gospel has converted marriage and the propagation of the race into a *priestly function.* It is *in* the Lord that marriages are contracted, *in the Lord* that husband and wife love each other, *for the Lord* and His kingdom that they study to edify and improve one another, and *to the Lord* that they train up their children to be His subjects. In this way the motions of the flesh are made tributary to the kingdom of God, as is the appetite for food by its ministering to the preservation and growth of the body, which is the temple of the Holy Ghost; so that here also applies the saying of the apostle, "Every creature of God is good (in itself), and nothing to be refused if it be received *with thanksgiving.*"[3] The Lord's Prayer, when prayed with a grateful heart over food, converts it from being poor food for the body into a spiritual blessing, a mean of promoting the Lord's kingdom, and a pledge of the munificent heart which is displayed in His manifold gifts to man. The same may be said of the natural instincts, in so far as they are consecrated in holy wedlock, and employed, not for carnal pleasure and in mere bondage to the flesh, but are refined and elevated by a spiritual affection for the mate assigned to us by God, and in order, if such be His will, to usher into the world future subjects for His kingdom.

[1] Gen. ii. 22. [2] Matt. xix. 3 *et seq.* [3] 1 Tim. iv. 4.

Not until, in the light of divine truth, a clear conception of the nature of holy wedlock, and its efficacy in sanctifying the natural instincts, has dawned upon the mind, does a man learn what *being unchaste* really is. Then, however, with holy shame he recognises how every motion of the flesh, unless spiritually cleansed and sanctified in matrimony, lowers him to a level with the brute, just like the brutish appetites which cleave to meat and drink *for the mere pleasure* they afford. Then does he blush to feel how the female is degraded when made the mere partner of a low passion—then does his conscience begin to quake at the crime of ushering, *from any such ignoble motive*, a human life into the world—a life destined *to endure for ever* in felicity or woe, and that under circumstances *wholly devoid of the means and appliances for training it for heaven.* Oh ye who are the offspring of unguarded hours, the fruit of criminal passion, doomed to grow up without knowing what it is to have *father or mother, or sister or brother*, or any one to care for your bodies or to watch for your souls, without parental blessing or social respect—how if ye shall one day, before the throne of God, call down vengeance upon the authors of your birth, and all *your* sins be made to fall upon *their* heads! Human life is a holy thing, and we deem it a crime to *put an end* to it in thoughtless delirium. Is it less a crime in thoughtless delirium *to give it a beginning?*

When a Christian has learned to treat with chaste and priestly reserve all that has a reference to sex, how he must abominate the levity with which the world is wont to make such subjects the theme of light and often filthy jests. The Christian, on the contrary, feels himself bound to say, *This also is holy ground;* and oh, how loud the call to seriousness in all that concerns chastity which resounds from the Word of God!

"*Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*" O terrible word! How like a flash of devouring lightning it darts in upon the frivolity of the world and the age! It is the word of a God

who, from those He enlists in His service, requires purity in the *heart* as well as in the bodily members. Every sin begins much earlier than the outward act in which it breaks forth, just as the conflagration commences long before the flame bursts inextinguishably through window and roof. Oh, with how adulterous a generation we are encompassed on every side, if the men of our time are to be judged by this word of the Lord! Do they remember at all the seventh commandment to keep it holy, or ever think that it is possible to break it even with the *lips* and the *heart?* We are told to resist the beginnings of all passion; and in the case of a passion so inflammable as that of which we speak, it is of special necessity to smother the impure fire so long as it merely glimmers in the heart, and does not burst out at the windows. Know you not the adage, Beginning and end join hand in hand. How lightly the children of the world treat what the apostle calls "filthiness, and foolish talking, and jesting"! They say, forsooth, It was a mere passing word! But who does not know how every such word we utter has a retroactive effect upon the tinder of lust in the interior of the heart? As a draught of wind strengthens the flame on which it is let in, the same effect upon an impure desire has the utterance of it in speech. Oh, my friends, be assured there is no holier guardian of chastity than *shame.* There are persons who say, "If it be the heart at which God looks, does the emission of lust out of it make a man worse, or is he the better for keeping it in? The Lord Jesus Christ here tells us, that long before the act, adultery is already committed by *a look.* If, then, you say that a man does not become worse by the escape of his lust, how can he be better by its *retention?* why not give the enemy leave to make off, seeing he creates so great a disturbance within, and the matter is not mended?" This inference has a fair show of truth; but it masks a knave who pretends concern for the divine commandment and law, while he is really seeking a decent cloak for his licentiousness. It is a case to which the apothegm applies, "My gifts to the mother are meant for the daughter." Observe,

a distinction must be drawn between two sorts of passion. The one is a fire which has already spread over the whole house, and burned the rafters to ashes, so that nothing is wanting but a gust of air to set it in a blaze at every corner. The other is still a harmless spark, which keeps to the floor, and will never rise to a flame if you do not open the window. In the one case the heart is already filled with filth, and only needs a sluice through which it may be discharged; in the other it only becomes full if the sluice be opened. In the one the devil has already woven his beautiful web in the dark with both woof and warp, and lacks but opportunity to show it off to the people; in the other he has merely wrought in a few threads of the warp, being hindered by want of light from freely and openly carrying on his work, unless you let light in. Do no such thing, but instantly close every sluice and opening about you, such as eyes and mouth and ears. Mark, also, how here Christ has not said, "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery," but has purposely subjoined the three little words, "*in his heart*;" thereby signifying that the act he speaks of is indeed an adultery, but not so heinous as when it is manifested to all the world.

Oh how high the estimation in which sacred Scripture has set the frail earthly tabernacle of the human body! This the apostle tells us when he says, that since his spirit has been knit in wedlock to the Spirit of Christ, none of his members is any longer his own, but is *the property of the Lord;* and if so, none of them ought to be used under the capricious impulse of the wind of passion. There is another wind which blows in a Christian; for it is written that "the sons of God are led by the Spirit of God,"[1] and so are always led in a way which accords with His commandments, and of which he approves. A Christian man is therefore a *priest*, who, with all the members of his body and by every action of his life, perpetually presents an offering of frankincense to God, according to the words of the apostle: "Ye are bought with a price; therefore

[1] Rom. viii. 14.

glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." Again, we Christians are *soldiers*, and all our members weapons which belong to Christ, and with which we are to fight against sin in the holy cause of our beloved Lord, as the apostle says, "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."[1] And again: "The night is far spent; the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."[2] If, then, I am my Lord Christ's soldier, ought I to desert His standard and carry my weapons into the service of His adversary? What honest soldier ever acted such a part? Moreover, that lewdness, more than any other sin committed by the members, defiles and dishonours the body is manifest; for though gross falsehood may have slipped over thy tongue, and though thy hand may even have perpetrated a murder, still these are transient acts, and the filth of them does not cleave so closely to the body, and so deeply mark, poison, and disfigure it as fleshly indulgences, and, worst of all, lewdness. That is the reason why the apostle here says, "Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body."

Neither I nor my members are any longer my own. They are Christ's, and by every unchaste act I sin against Him as well as against myself. Pious Joseph! thou too didst know that he who sins against his body sins also against *some one else*, and in the hour of temptation didst exclaim, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin *against God?*" and thine example I will keep before my eyes. But from Thee, also, my God, I will implore strength to be chaste and temperate, and of a pure heart, as Solomon of old prayed: "When I perceived that I could not otherwise obtain wisdom, except God gave her me, I prayed unto the Lord, and besought Him." And Thou, too, O Lord Christ, whose priest and soldier I am, set Thyself

[1] Rom. vi. 13. [2] Rom. xiii. 12.

before my eyes in Thy robe of light, that I may hate whatever in me is dark. Stand ever before me in the guise of Thy sufferings—those sufferings that were endured for love of me. Let Thy nails be thorns in my side at every motion of lust; let Thy thorny crown pierce deep into my heart when impure desires would there awake. O crucified Love, let all be crucified within and about me which does not resemble Thee!

Holy and chaste, O Lord, Thou wert,
So pure Thy love that it preferred,
Of Adam's fallen race,
To be Thy bride no single soul,
But yearned to comprehend the whole
Within its vast embrace.
O do my breast inspire
With a like holy fire,
And let its spotless light
Beam through my being quite,
And teach me how to love aright.

Lord, Thou didst brook a death of pain,
And in the garden groan, to gain
Thy bride, beloved so well.
Let Thy fond toils and holy zeal,
And woes endured my soul to heal,
Deep in my memory dwell;
So shall I see, with shame,
And feel how vile I am;
So, too, Thy passion's smart
Shall keenly wound my heart,
And all its sinful lusts depart.

52.

The Love of Money is the Root of all Evil.

My care is, like the little birds, to praise and thank the Lord;
His to provide my meat and drink, according to His word.

1 John, ii. 16. "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

PSALM cxxvii. 1, 2. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is in vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows, for he giveth to His beloved while asleep." [1]

MATT. vi. 34. "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

MATT. vi. 11. "Give us this day our daily bread."

MATT. vi. 24. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

1 TIM. vi. 10. "The love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

PROV. xxx. 8. "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me."

"GIVE us this day our daily bread" is a favourite petition of mine, in the prayer of our Lord. I know full well that some endeavour to affix to it a spiritual meaning, but of that I cannot approve. The Lord has given us so many beautiful petitions for spiritual good things, ought there not to be at least one in which we may beg from Him what is good for the body? It is so pleasant a sight, when around the head of a family upon earth, the children, and servants, and all the members of the household congregate with expectant and supplicating eyes, and when his hand deals out to each the portion convenient for him. And pleasant also is it for the soul to figure to itself the Master of the world seated upon the golden rainbow, which reaches from heaven to earth, and the whole human family, with the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, approaching Him every returning morning, and departing with their wants satisfied by His hands. It is thus that I picture to myself our Father in heaven when I pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," and think of all the thousand millions who come along with me into His

[1] Luther's version.

presence, and, whether silently or with articulate speech, join in my supplication. It seems to me as if the bread were tasteless until it has been consecrated and blessed by prayer and thanksgiving. Were I forbidden to *pray* for it, I should then be obliged to *take anxious thought* about it. Now, however, this brief petition, which has been taught us by the Lord, serves as a little vessel, on which I embark all my anxiety, and cast it upon Him who commands us to do so, saying in His Word, "Cast all your care upon Him, for He careth for you."[1] "When care has driven me to prayer," says worthy Philip Melanchthon, "I in my turn drive care by prayer away." If, in this manner, we have committed our whole cause unto the Lord, we then enter upon our employments with double alacrity, and all our works prosper as if the hands of angels helped us to perform them. No doubt the cheerful song, "Begone, dull care," is sung by birds of very different feather. It is sung by the sprightly finch, who looks mirthfully out, like thoughtless Jack, upon the world; but it is also sung by the lark, when in the blush of morning it soars aloft into the clouds. Judging from the sound, we might suppose that it was all one melody; but listen with attention and you will soon perceive that, although there seems little difference in the notes, the *words* at least are not the same. For while the one sings—

On *nothing* have I built my cause;

the other is singing—

I upon God my cause have built.

And if you listen a little longer, you will, I think, come to find that there is a difference also in the *tune.*

How grateful I feel to our blessed Lord, that both by the beautiful *prayer*, "Give us this day our daily bread," and likewise by the no less beautiful *precept*, "Take no thought for the morrow," He has made us so perfectly free, and has disencumbered us not only *of care*, but at the same time of avarice, that

[1] 1 Peter, v. 7.

hateful vice, which crawls like a reptile upon the ground! Of all sins, avarice seems to me the *least human.* From other sins a man reaps a certain modicum of good, while they still leave unbroken some of the ties that bind him to his fellow-men; but the miser tears himself loose from his kind, as well as from living nature, to caress a piece of lifeless metal. It is a most irrational sin, but may be best understood when it is the offspring of an unbelieving heart, which puts no trust in Him who feeds the sprightly birds of the air, and clothes the lilies of the field. It does seem to me a toilsome piece of work which the miser undertakes, for it is nothing less than to provide beforehand against all that the future may bring—against danger, and dearth, and disease, and nakedness. No wonder that there is no end to his cares, and yet that he himself never thinks that he is careful enough. The blind fool! God has made the task so easy to him, and yet he makes it so difficult to himself. In the fear of a future burden he heaps millstones upon his shoulder, and in apprehension of *possible* strokes of the rod, is every moment actually lashing the skin from his back. Unhappy man! surely there are already millstones and stripes enough in the world; why shouldst thou of thine own accord add to their number?

Even the avarice which is the offspring of unbelief is *irrational;* for how can so weak a creature as man erect a fence, or stop the chinks so as to protect himself, from what quarter soever the bitter wind may blow? In another respect, however, the miser acts contrary to reason. At every step by which he advances towards the boundary where all earthly care is to be laid aside, his carefulness, instead of lessening, becomes greater, which shows off his folly in the clearest light. Moreover, just as misfortunes never come single, so neither does this sin. A certain haughtiness and *pride* always go hand in hand with the unbelief of avarice; and the reason is this: money is the common measure by which the world estimates worth, and the miser, knowing this, feels his own weight, takes credit to himself for it, and says to his soul,

"Soul, thou now possessest what many thousands long for, but cannot find; take then thine ease." As is the case, however, with all sin, so likewise is it with the pride of purse; the evil passion falls out with itself. The person we describe would fain publish on every street the magnitude of his accumulated treasures, in order to receive his reward from the world, and be treated with due respect. Fain would he stalk along in pomp and splendour, that, as Luther says, he may be taken for one of the great ones. But here he is encountered by the *fear* that, by proclaiming the greatness of his riches, he may incur the danger of their loss; and hence he is compelled to content himself, well or ill, with burning his incense beside his money-bags, in the silence and privacy of his own chamber, and before himself. Now, if a man have carried his foolish greed of the earthly mammon to the furthest extreme, then, just as we see in the case of other sins, that the sinner loses all thought, and runs quite like a dog or other lower animal, in spite of blows, wherever hunger drives him, and rushes upon the object of his desire, so likewise does it happen to the miser. Without consciousness or thought, and as if impelled by a natural instinct, he is enticed by the yellow lustre of the metal, and can never satiate himself with beholding it. There have been instances of misers, when overtaken by the hour of death, and forced to bid adieu to all things, causing their money-bags, as the dearest of objects, to be brought into their presence, in order to feast their eyes with another and a final look at them.

Oh how the divine image is dishonoured when thus surrendered in bondage to the lifeless dust of the earth! Oh the disgrace of such *idolatry!*[1] There stands the yellow Moloch, and into its fiery belly are cast wife and child, honour, affection, and enjoyment—all, all must be sacrificed at the command of the idol. This, no doubt, is the reason why the apostle calls avarice "the root of all evil." It is very true that the habit of sacrificing all to his idol is not peculiar to the

[1] Col. iii. 5.

miser, for whatever a man loves supremely becomes an idol to him; and whether it be Baal or Moloch, to it he offers up everything else. Thus will the voluptuary, in the madness of his passion, cast wife, child, honour, and wealth into the arms of the fiery Moloch, and still more will the proud man do for the Baal of his pride. In one respect, however, avarice differs from other kinds of sin. The slave of pride, and still more the slave of lust, retain in a higher degree sensibility for what among men is considered delicate, tender, and lovely; and unless their sin have been indulged to the greatest excess, they can still take delight in the beauties and sublimities of nature. Of the miser, however, the contrary of all this is true; for from him neither the gentle love of woman, nor the innocent laughter of children, nor the magnificent works of nature, can any longer elicit a sense of joy. The sallow glitter of gold, that reflection of hell, obliterates even the most beautiful picture which the material world paints to charm the eye. Here again it may be discovered, that what a man *believes* determines how he *lives*, and that he himself becomes such as is his god.

> Man grows like what he worships, and the curse
> Of base idolatry lies in itself.

Having surrendered himself a slave to the dust of the earth, the miser, like that dust, becomes dry and sapless, pale, cold, and dead as the metal at his feet, to which he has sold his heart.

> Who can the magic power of gold divine,
> With which it tempts the sons of men astray?
> By hell ignited seems its pallid shine,
> A night-laid lure, and human souls the prey.
> Lifeless and wan, it yet can love inspire,
> And woo to bridal joys with flatteries base;
> Till, quenched by icy coldness all his fire,
> The lover turns to stone in its embrace.
>
> Arrested in my veins the blood I feel,
> When thee, O sordid idol, I behold;
> Thy secret spells through all my being steal,
> And like a net unseen my heart enfold.

But, Lord, on *Thy* warm breast in terror sinking,
I fly the fiend that seeks me for a prey,
And love eternal at the fountain drinking,
I spurn for ever earth's vile dross away.

Gracious God, Thou hast freed me from all servile care, as well as from all ungodly *carelessness* touching the good things of this earth. My prayer to Thee, therefore, is, Protect me from riches; protect me also from poverty. "Give me the portion convenient for me," and help me to employ it faithfully as Thy steward. There is truth in the saying of the apostle, that "they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare."[1] Whatever worldly wealth we do possess, we ought, according to the same apostle's admonition, to "possess as though we possessed it not." The case, however, rather is, that the more a man has, the more does his heart from custom become attached to it, so that he will not let it go. As the hen is unwilling to lay her egg except in the nest where one has been already laid, so none think of accumulating riches but he who already possesses some little store. Hence, as Luther says, nowhere is dearth so great as in places where there are wealthy people; and the temptation to avarice is far stronger among the rich than among the poor. Just, however, as that reformer has compared the world to a drunken clown, who, if he does not fall from his ass on the right side, is sure to fall off on the left; so does it happen to the rich man, that if he escapes the snare of avarice, he is betrayed into that of luxury. No doubt it is possible for those who possess the good things of this world "*to use, as not abusing* them;"[2] but the proverb tells us that "opportunity makes thieves;" and if we have the power over many things, the use we make of many of them is so immoderate as at last to become abuse. On the other hand, *poverty* is likewise a temptation from the Lord, inasmuch as it *impoverishes a man of his courage;* and it is exceedingly difficult to keep the heart aloft with God while the members are toiling bitterly here below. For this reason,

[1] 1 Tim. vi. 9. [2] 1 Cor. vii. 31.

doubtless, the easiest task which the Lord imposes upon His disciples is that of those to whom He allots a *convenient portion*, neither too little nor too much. Alas! when I seriously reflect, I find that it is a great deal over which I have been appointed steward. There is deep truth in the saying of the poet, that "the poorest beggar, even when his penury is greatest, has still superfluity." How few there are who cannot, when put to it, increase their savings, and curtail their outlay! and even if that be impossible, how many powers and talents they possess which may still be laid out at interest, not only for heaven, but also for this earth, to the increase of their temporal welfare! The faithful management of these earthly good things is the first step that we must take, as the Lord expressly says, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If, therefore, ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? and if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?"[1] According to this, earthly riches are another's, and are not the *true* riches; and until we learn to manage them according to the will of God, the higher blessings will not be committed to our charge. This is a very serious appeal. How frequently does the Lord in His Word inculcate upon us such duties as the giving of alms, laying up treasures in heaven, making to ourselves friends in the everlasting habitations with earthly mammon, and not fastening the heart upon riches![2] So that we easily see that one chief point in a Christian's life is to lay out earthly wealth at interest and usury for the kingdom of God. The man who will not intrust his body to the Lord will certainly not intrust his soul to Him; and just as little will he who, in the use of his wealth, forgets his future accountability, employ his talents and his mind in the Lord's service.

[1] Luke, xvi. 10-12.

[2] Mark, x. 24; Luke, xii. 15-33; Matt. vi. 20; Luke, xvi. 9.

For this reason I implore Thee, gracious God, help me to disengage my heart from all that I possess, that so I may cheerfully surrender it, to be at Thy free disposal. What am I, with all my wealth, but Thy purse-bearer? Only let me hear Thy voice distinctly when Thou sayest, "Open my money-bag, and pay out for me;" and then help me to perform with my hand what I have heard with my ears. Alas! I know full well how easily a man may be brought to cleave anxiously to earthly wealth, and therefore I shrink from the least commencement of such idolatry of mammon. I almost tremble when I catch myself looking with special fondness upon a bit of gold. He who has never *experienced* that it fascinates like the eye of the rattlesnake, may laugh at me if he likes; but the person who has once been bitten by a serpent may be excused for being afraid of even the bit of rope that he sees lying upon the road.

Jesus, in Thy compassion great,
Didst Thou, to share our poor estate
 On earth, resign Thy heavenly throne?
How deep my shame that earthly treasure
Allures my heart, or gives it pleasure,
 Whose portion should be God alone!
Oh let Thy sore abasement be
A faithful monitor to me,
So that each wish unblest
May humbly be confessed,
And deeply mourned upon Thy breast.

Straw and a manger were Thy bed;
No place hadst Thou to lay Thy head,
 When into earth's bleak desert born.
How then shall I my head repose
On pleasures withering as the rose,
 Since Thou for me didst bear such scorn?
Grant that Thy want and poverty
My buckler and my shield may be,
When greed of worldly gain,
Or thirst of pleasures vain,
Attempts in my weak heart to reign.

53.

Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly.

What is HUMILITY? *It is to be*
Of one's OWN SELF FORGETFUL. *But to thee*
That seems a bitter morsel, and to mete
Thy worth with that of others far more sweet.
Make JESUS *then thy model, and I think*
Thenceforth from all comparing thou wilt shrink.

1 JOHN, ii. 16. "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

MATT. xi. 29. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

PHIL. ii. 2-5. "Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

ECCLUS. iii. 18-20. "The greater thou art, the more humble thyself, and thou shalt find favour before the Lord; for the power of the Lord is great, and He is honoured of" (Luther's version, "doeth great things by") "the lowly."

PRIDE was the first sin committed in the universe which God had created pure; by it the archangel fell, and was cast into the bottomless pit; and pride is the last sin which is extirpated from the hearts of the regenerate. This St Augustine affirms. He says: "When the saint imagines that he sees all his lusts at his feet, and begins on that account to exult,

the voice of Satan is heard amidst his exultation calling to him, 'Why, O man, dost thou rejoice? see, even here I am present.'" More than any other it is a sin which, when beaten from the outworks, can retreat into the inmost recesses of the breast, and more and more deceptively assume the form of an angel of light. Of all sins it is the most spiritual, and for that reason also the most *deep-rooted* and *seductive*. It is the sin through which man is most easily seduced into a conceit of his own greatness, and in that way it betrayed Lucifer to his fall. For what is the object to which haughtiness and pride aspire? Is it not the idea entertained by other men of our worth which casts its brightness and glimmer into our own soul, and so becomes our idol? Pride is consequently a *spiritual* idol. If it be true that that is a man's god which he loves supremely, then is the god of the *miser* a bit of metal produced in the dust of the earth; and the god of the *voluptuary* is the flesh, and the indulgence of its propensities. Not such the god of the *proud man*. That is begotten not of the dust, neither of the flesh, but of the spirit itself. No doubt here, as elsewhere, much depends on the kind of things for which a man values himself. These may be things which do *not* pertain to his true being, such as his coat, his house, or his estate; or they may be *spiritual things*,—either talents, which belong to the head, and when governed by a dark heart are just so many instruments of ruin—or *the* virtuous qualities, which pertain to the real kernel of human nature. Suppose, then, that the homage which a man claims from his fellow-men is claimed for *spiritual* gifts, and exclusively for such of these as are his own enduring possession—viz., *virtues of the heart*—what are we to think? It may be very well to say to one who values himself for nothing but his clothes, "Let moths corrupt them if they will;" but when that for which he values himself is of divine nature and origin, is he not entitled to claim for it the homage of his fellow-men? Let him who attempts to make something of his nothing, and to pass off his owl for a falcon, receive to his shame the ridicule which he deserves. But if a man have

a real *falcon*, is he not entitled to fly it off into the air in the presence of all the people, and to receive in their exultation and applause the tribute of honour which pertains to him? *Vanity*, if it be as the name imports—satisfaction in that which is *empty* and *null*—will be defended by no one. If, however, it be satisfaction in things that are really good, ought we not then to invite others to rejoice in them along with us, in order that in the light of *their* joy our gifts may show their true brightness? Such, no doubt, has been the opinion, not merely of men of little but of men of great minds. One of these, whose doctrine —for reasons not difficult to understand—appears to many a far more joyful message than that which has sounded out into the world from the foot of a *cross*, I mean the poet Goethe, writes as follows: "What is called vanity was never offensive to me, and I, on my part, permitted myself to be vain in my turn; that is, I felt no scruple in bringing into view the things about me with which I was pleased. The word vanity is too often misapplied; properly, it conveys with it the idea of emptiness, and is fairly used only to indicate a person who cannot conceal his satisfaction at his own nothingness." There is no doubt that he whose words these are was a great man; but it is written, "Great men are not always wise;"[1] and there is some truth also in the proverb, that "Great men's follies are never small." I will therefore rather appeal to Him who is *supremely great*, and who has told us, "Let your light so shine before men *that they may see your good works*." But here I do not read in the clause subjoined either "that you may rejoice over them," or "that you may obtain the prize which you deserve." What I read is, "*And glorify your Father which is in heaven*." To be sure, if we poor creatures possessed all we have otherwise than in fee—if we had grown it upon our own soil, and contributed to it not merely our strength and labour, but likewise the sunshine and rain that fostered its growth, we might then claim a right to let our good deeds shine before men in order *to earn their praise*. If, however, we pon-

[1] Job, xxxii. 9.

der the question of the apostle: O man, "what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?"[1]—if among the things belonging to us, and upon which we might possibly congratulate ourselves, there be not one which does not remind us of the Giver of all good gifts, and far oftener how shamefully these have been *abused* by us, and *embezzled* and *defaced*,—the very last idea to enter our minds must be that of parading them before men, merely that they may praise *us*. No: even were they to come, as they once did to Barnabas and Saul, with sacrifices and garlands, ought we not then, like these apostles, to be ready rather to rend our clothes and cry out: "Sirs, why do ye these things? we also are men of like passions with you. If there be anything praiseworthy about us, look up to those bright heights from which every good and perfect gift cometh down as streams do from the mountains to irrigate and bless the plains below"?[2] Certainly the feeling nearest the heart of a Christian when he observes anything good in or about himself is not *vanity*, but mere *gratitude*. And though it may be a good of an inferior kind—such, for example, as a fine commanding figure, which captivates the beholder before the mouth speaks, or fluent speech and wit, or graceful and amiable manners by which the heart is enchained; and though all others may fix their eyes solely upon the poor instrument deemed worthy of so rich an endowment, still, if he be a child of God, he will only look up to the heavenly Father, and desire that the due praise and worship for having so nobly furnished and adorned one of His human creatures should be offered to Him alone. For myself, were such homage offered to *me* on every side, far from inspiring exultation, it would only make me sad. I know too well who the *Superior* is who has so liberally and generously provided for his poor vassal; and I know, too, that all His gifts might have been improved to His honour and glory far more faithfully than I have ever done. No holier tears can be shed than those which are shed by him

[1] 1 Cor. iv. 7. [2] Acts, xiv. 14 *et seq.*

who receives praise to which he has no title. And is not this the case wherever men squander upon His servants the commendation which pertains to the Lord alone. But ah! how many there are who allow themselves to be seduced from that which is good by the very benefits with which heavenly Love has blessed them, and shut the door of their hearts against the Giver for no better reason than because they have bestowed all their love upon His *gifts*—like the honeysuckle, which, although it owes its blossoms to the sunbeams, excludes light from the bower!

If a man have once yielded to seduction so far as to accept as rightfully due to himself the homage due only to the Lord, how ready he then also becomes to forget the admonition addressed by the apostle to every man, "Not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think."[1] In such a case we do not rest in the gifts we have received, but take credit for many more which we have not received, make others little, that we may magnify ourselves, forget the blemishes and sores which we bear in our souls within, and seek occasions for display, till at last we are not only not contented to be above all *men*, but cannot tolerate to have others at our side, and so the usual issue is that a man comes to look even upon *God* as his enemy. Generally, in fact, it is in the apostasy of the heart from God that the original root of all pride and vanity is to be sought, according to the words of Sirach: "The beginning of pride is when one departeth from God, and *his heart is turned away from his Maker*."[2] The dark spirit of rebellion proceeds ever further and further, until the man takes his seat in the temple of the Lord, and worships no God but himself. Avarice turns man into a *stone* and lust into a *brute*, but pride makes him a *devil;* and little progress has been made in self-knowledge by him who has never discovered in the human breast the black teeth of the dragon, from which basilisks like this may spring up. Has not heathenism itself, in the fables of Prometheus and the Titans, borne testimony to this fact; for what else

[1] Rom. xii. 3. [2] Ecclus. x. 14.

were these designed to teach, save that a dark and blind spirit dwells in man which will worship none but itself, and is never content until it has wrested the sceptre from the hand of Omnipotence in heaven?

Humility! humility! thou noblest and most difficult of all human virtues, in what school can we learn thee? Certainly in none but His who has said, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart."[1] There are many vices over which a man may become master without religion, and mainly by the help of pride, as when lions are used to subdue hyenas. But pride, with all its kindred brood of vanity, arrogance, and self-conceit, no man can effectually overcome without religion, or otherwise than by the *spirit of Jesus Christ.* Until he has been brought to bow the knee before the Father of lights, as the giver of every good and perfect gift, he will bend it only *before himself*, and will continually look upon all he possesses as Nebuchadnezzar did upon Babylon, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?"[2] It is in this manner that piety, by making us feel that we possess not one single advantage which we can call *our own*, but are dependent and helpless creatures, who need to receive from a stranger's hand our spiritual, like our bodily food, generally leads us to humility before God; and not until we have become humble before *Him* can we ever become humble before *men.* But how much better is this lesson learned in the school of Christ? There we are tutored into poverty of spirit; there we are led to see that we are not merely *dependent* and *helpless*, but *wicked* and *perverse*, children of the heavenly Father, who in justice deserve nothing but to be rejected, but to whom, nevertheless, He stretches out His paternal arms. There, too, we behold the only-begotten Son of the Father, Himself bereft of His radiant crown, and walking about among the sick and wretched, as one who came into the world for nothing but to "minister."[3] How can any one

[1] Matt. xi. 29. [2] Dan. iv. 30. [3] Matt. xx. 28.

who in this school has heard of the ten thousand talents which he owed to the King of kings, and of the free and gracious remission to him of the debt, ever possibly lay hands upon a fellow-servant who owes him a hundred pence, and insist on being paid? How can he possibly be jealous and despise others, or aspire to sit above them?[1] Nothing is so well calculated to promote humility as the knowledge of our *guilt in the sight of God;* and often when I see this one or that proudly vaunting himself, and sitting in judgment upon his neighbour, I would fain take him by the arm and say, "Friend, remember *the ten thousand talents.*" It is quite true that "life and death are in the power of the tongue;"[2] but the tongue in its turn is in the power either of a proud heart or of one which grace has made humble; for the tongue is only the heart's interpreter. Why do people preach so much against backbiting, evil-speaking, and judging others? Can anything else proceed out of the mouth but that which springs in the heart? and there, so deeply rooted is the desire to lower others in order to raise ourselves, that the evil admits of no remedy, until in the school of Jesus we have thoroughly learned the meaning of the word *Grace.*

And even after grace has driven self-conceit from the heart, how easily and unobservedly it can steal back, unless we do our utmost to stand upon our guard! for certain there is no sin which so insensibly entangles us afresh in its snare as pride. An Eastern poet says—

> "Seest thou the black foot of the ant, when at the dead of night
> It o'er the dark stone silently speeds its mysterious flight?
> Yet harder far I ween of *pride* the stealthy steps to trace,
> When in the bosom of the saint it seeks its long-lost place."

We need do nothing but begin *comparing* ourselves with others, and pride instantly makes its appearance afresh. The apostle says, "Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another; for every man shall bear his own burden."[3] If he cease for a moment

[1] Matt. xviii. 23. [2] Prov. xviii. 21. [3] Gal. vi. 4, 5.

to direct his view simply and straightly to his own work and burden, self-conceit immediately recurs. There can be no doubt that the reason why our Saviour was so fond of children was, that they are without self-conceit. When His disciples inquired which of them would be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, He called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said: "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."[1] The child does not compare, exercises little reflection, looks neither to the right nor left, and the son of a king will play with a beggar's boy without thinking of his dignity at all. Now the longer a man frequents the school of Jesus, the more he learns to keep in his own path, to commit to the Lord, whose servants they are, the task of pronouncing judgment upon others, to abstain from all comparisons, and to go with his burden to the Lord in prayer. How beautiful it is to see true Christian humility gladdening the eyes of all others, but unconscious of its own brightness! In fact, what lovelier spectacle can be presented to the view of men or angels than a disciple of Jesus ever employed in covering the glowing embers of charity beneath the ashes of self-abasement? We read that when Moses came down from the presence of the Lord the skin of his face shone, "*but he wist not of it.*"[2] And is not this written for an ensample to us all? In like manner the blessed apostle was not looking to the right or the left when he made the confession: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, *of whom I am the chief.*"[3] And so it always is with him who abstains from comparing himself with others; in his own eyes he is ever the worst. For certain St Paul never once looked either up or down the bench of penitents to see whether Zaccheus or the Magdalene or the crucified thief were seated below him. He looked no

[1] Matt. xviii. 3, 4. [2] Exod. xxxiv. 29. [3] 1 Tim. i. 15.

where but at his own account, and that was the reason he appeared to himself so little and so vile. To the same effect he writes, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind *let each esteem other better than themselves.*" It might be supposed that here too much is required, in respect that to esteem *every other* better than one's self is simply impossible. In my opinion, however, all that the apostle intended was, that he who proposes to sweep his own front clean will need all his brooms for the purpose, and will have no leisure for large observation of the broken pots which may possibly be lying behind a neighbour's door; and it is only what we *observe* that we *pass judgment* upon. In this manner humility is the source of charity, which, until unavoidably forced to the contrary, "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."[1]

And yet Christian humility will not throw herself away, and never appear but in the guise of a miserable sinner; because He, in whose school we have all been made *miserable sinners*, has likewise made us *children of God*,—in the exercise of free *grace* no doubt, and not for the merit of our works, that no flesh may boast. Christian humility will not throw itself away because occasions may come which require a Christian to avouch and vindicate both *what and how much grace has been bestowed* upon him. Not in vain has it been recorded that St Paul asserted his right to the privileges of a Roman citizen;[2] and as members of Christ and subjects of His kingdom, we also have rights and prerogatives. Generally, indeed, the humble disciple of Jesus walks through life with a bent rather than with an uplifted head, like a tree loaded with fruit. *When the occasion emerges*, however, he too can hold his head up like others. He does not, indeed, either say or sing much about the gifts and graces which he has received, just as full vessels differ from empty ones by the feebler sound which they emit. But where *the case calls for it*, he also can cheerfully sing and play, not indeed to *his own*, but to *his Master's glory*.

[1] 1 Cor. xiii. 7. [2] Acts, xxii. 28.

Under the purifying influence of the Spirit of Christ, we reach a point at which, in childlike simplicity, we can be conscious of, and are able also, if need be, to assert, the gifts we have received. A Christian may advance so far as, *totally irrespective of himself*, to defend his honour, office, good name, and right of adoption, solely as a good conferred upon him by the *Lord*. No doubt this is a difficult, a very difficult attainment. It is perhaps the last and loftiest stage to which the Spirit of the Lord elevates a believer when he can contend for what he possesses in such a way as to be really contending for *his Lord*. There are, however, some—nay, *many*—who in the school of Jesus have learned *this* art. Of Thee, therefore, O Lord, I now implore to take me also more and more into Thy school. I must confess, to Thine honour, that Thy Spirit has made a new man of me. I *have* learned humility. I *am conscious* of being humbled—humbled like the grain of dust at my feet; and I *have* also been humbled in the sight of *others*. I judge no one. I know that all I have is of grace, and that for what I lack I deserve Thy wrath, and it is for that reason I judge no one. In spite of all this, however, there do come times in which I permit myself to fancy that I am something, and when I feel that it is very hard *to minister*. Take me then, O Jesus, who wert Thyself so humble, into Thy school. In truth I would fain learn to minister, and learn it from Thy example. Thou knowest how much I hate myself —hate my vain and haughty heart, which can still so shamefully and slavishly satiate itself with human praise. Take me into Thy school, my Saviour and my Lord, and help me to become humble.

Lord, like the sun without its crown
Of rays, didst Thou to earth come down,
 And walk in lowliness;
And that the timid might not fear,
Didst hide Thy majesty while here
 Beneath a servile dress.
Lord, in Thy school I fain would be,
To learn humility of Thee.

O mild and holy Light,
Beam on my inward sight,–
Show me my littleness aright.

Lo, in an equal line we see
Thy saints of high and low degree
 Advancing to the throne.
'Mong them no pride and strife appear;
One king they own, one badge they wear;
 Their king is David's Son.
Zaccheus and the thief between,
Walks, all in tears, the Magdalene,
 And next to them St John;
And all receive the great reward
Of *absolution* from the Lord.

54.

Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly.

Wrath is so grim and wild a flame,
Who doubts that from hell's pit it came?
And I with it all league disclaim.

My son, at common fire you take alarm,
But if it BURN ON ALTARS, *dread no harm:*
Drop, then, the MASTER'S SPIRIT *on thine ire,*
And with THAT INCENSE *consecrate the fire.*

MATT. v. 5. "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

MATT. xi. 29. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

TITUS, iii. 2-5. "To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But

after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

SACRED in the view of every Christian soul stands the image of the Saviour's meekness. How often has it caused the towering waves raised by the storms of passion in the hearts of men to subside! How often have the arms that were lifted up in anger dropped at the sight of it! If there be any virtue which men generally expect to find in a disciple of the Lord, it is meekness. Like humility and charity, it is looked upon as a peculiarly *Christian* grace. *Humility* and *meekness* are twin sisters, and grow like buds on the common stalk of *charity*. "For," saith the apostle, "charity suffereth long, and is kind," and, consequently, is likewise humble and meek. Not only did the Saviour and His apostles frequently inculcate meekness by *word* of mouth—He did it much more forcibly by His actions and His sufferings. There is so great kindness and benignity, gentleness, and condescension, in His whole demeanour, that even if we had not been told, we might at once have divined that, according to His own affirmation, "God sent not His Son into the world *to condemn* the world, but that the world through Him might *be saved*."[1] And, in truth, he who proposes to save the world can come to it in no other garb save that of meekness and gentleness. And what is there that preaches this virtue so loudly as the *cross?* A crucifix appears a very simple object, and yet it may well be doubted whether these crucifixes have not done more to spread the Gospel than multitudes of preachers. For myself, I cannot look upon one but a wondrous throng of devout and holy thoughts rush through my heart: and what a crucifix preaches most of all is meekness and patient obedience, so that one might imagine that, with a cross before his eyes,

[1] John, iii. 17.

or a picture of Him who suffered upon it, it would be impossible for a Christian to utter a harsh or an injurious word. A gentle and meek spirit is one of the highest and holiest virtues with which a Christian can be endowed; nor is it, as many suppose, by any means a *feminine* virtue. On the contrary, when rightly understood, it is rather a *strong*, *masculine*, and *heroic* virtue. According to the words of Solomon: "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city."[1] It requires greater strength of soul to endure aright protracted suffering, than to achieve some arduous enterprise of faith. For the latter, all that is needed is to collect the energies for a moment, and under circumstances that excite to action; whereas, for the former, as great a force of faith and submission must be opposed to suffering, and this must be done for years, and repeated every moment, without any stimulus from without.

Meekness and patience are virtues of a noble class, and no one knows so well as I myself how much I need the daily teaching of the meek and patient Saviour, that in *this way* also I may learn to tread in His footsteps. At the same time, with all my heart I hate that kind of meekness which cannot be *angry when there is a just cause for anger*. Such meekness, I know, *does not spring from a divine root*. No doubt it is written, "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God;"[2] and elsewhere we are admonished not to let the sun go down upon our wrath.[3] The proverb also says that "he who controls his anger conquers an enemy;" but, nevertheless, anger does not always come from the wicked one. The Holy One of Israel is said "to roar like a lion"[4] in His wrath; and there is also a wrath *of the Lamb*, before which the men of the world will tremble, and call *to the mountains and rocks*, "*Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb*,"[5] so terrible will be the anger of the Saviour when He appears in His

[1] Prov. xvi. 32. [2] James, i. 20. [3] Eph. iv. 26.
[4] Hos. xi. 10. [5] Rev. vi. 16.

kingly office. He was also, however, angry, when in His humiliation He sojourned among men; for it is written, "He looked round about on them *with anger*, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts."[1] Was He not angry when He plaited a scourge of cords and drove out those who had made His Father's house a den of thieves? Was He not angry when eight times in succession He pronounced a woe upon the hypocritical scribes who garnished the sepulchres of the righteous, and at the same time put righteous men to death? and again, when He said to them, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"[2] Besides, can any one love the Lord God with all his heart who does not hate those that hate *Him*, according to the ancient *boast* of the Psalmist: "Do not I hate them, O Lord, who hate Thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against Thee? I hate them with perfect hatred"?[3] In my opinion, righteous anger is nothing but abhorrence of evil carried into *action*, and conscious of the grounds on which it rests.

And it is only when I reflect upon what *righteous* anger is, that I clearly see how greatly I sin in this way. We are angry, but in our anger what we look to is not the cause of God, not His eternal law and truth, but *ourselves*. For the most part, human anger flows not from *hatred of that which is evil*, but from *love of self*. The consequence is, we do not know *why* we are angry, and therefore the proverb says with truth that anger is *blind*. It bewilders the head, and hence is always followed by repentance, of which it is said that "where wrath ends repentance begins." Holy anger, however, is well aware of its own reasons; for just as in his love, so likewise in his anger, does the Christian take his God and Saviour as a pattern. All that can be done by *love* he does, *patiently* waits where there is the hope of repentance, and does not suffer the flame of indignation to blaze until the measure of iniquity is full. Even when compelled to smite, he imitates his God,

[1] Mark, iii. 5. [2] Matt. xxiii. 33. [3] Psalm cxxxix. 21, 22.

who avers: "In my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee."[1]

Hence, when the Holy Scriptures so sharply forbid anger, a distinction must needs be drawn, because in these cases the anger is of the kind spoken of by the Lord when He says, "Whosoever is *angry* with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment."[2] And what kind of anger *that* is, not obscurely appears when he describes it as a transgression of the commandment, Thou shalt not kill; for this clearly intimates that he refers to an anger which has already, so to speak, begun to kill in the heart, and is seeking revenge solely in its own behalf, and not from a regard to God, or in order that righteousness and equity may be established on the earth, and a wall of defence raised against the transgressor.

What would have become of the Church if the Lord's servants and prophets had at all times done nothing else but spread salves upon sores and walk softly? In selecting instruments for His work, has He not always preferred those who had fortitude enough to feel a just and noble indignation at the ungodliness of the world? Take, for example, our own Luther. No doubt he often carried his wrath somewhat too far and cried too loud, of which he never failed humbly to repent; still, *upon the whole*, he showed great boldness and confidence that he was right in the indignation with which he combated the enemies of the Gospel. On one occasion, when asked by the Margrave Joachim, 2d, Why he wrote against the princes? he returned the beautiful answer: "When God intends to fertilise the ground He must needs send first of all a good thunder-storm, and afterwards a slow and gentle rain, and thus make it thoroughly productive." Elsewhere he says, "A willow branch may be cut with a knife and bent with a finger, but for a great and gnarled oak we must use an axe and a wedge;" and again, "If my teeth had been less *sharp*, the Pope would have been more *voracious*." "Of what use is salt," he exclaims, in another passage, "if it do not bite the

[1] Isa. lx. 10. [2] Matt. v. 22.

tongue? or the blade of a sword, unless it be sharp enough to cut?" Does not the prophet say, "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully, and keepeth back his sword from blood"? In all this, accordingly, the humble-minded man was conscious that he was doing what in the sight of God he had a right to do. At the same time, however, he had no desire to infringe the right of other good Christians by insisting that they should do the same; and heartily loved, and often wished to resemble, his friend Philip Melanchthon, who was of a gentler disposition. And to Brentius, another of his friends, he wrote these kind and beautiful words: "It is not thyself, Brentius, whom I praise, but the spirit which is in thee, and which is far more gentle, affectionate, and peaceable than *mine*, and, moreover, is adorned with all the arts of eloquence. Hence it is that thy discourse flows forth purer and clearer and more intelligible than that of other men, and consequently is better liked, and goes deeper into the heart. Whereas my spirit, besides being inexperienced in the liberal arts and destitute of refinement, does nothing but belch forth a vast forest and host of words, and thereby its fate is to be more uproarious and stormy. It is combative and must always be fighting with wild and monstrous beasts. To compare small things with great: '*Of the fourfold spirit of Elias*,[1] *I have received the wind and the earthquake and the fire, which rent the mountains and brake in pieces the rocks;*' whereas thou, and they who are like thee, have received '*the rustling breeze, so soft and gentle*' and cooling. And that is the reason why I, not to speak of others, take so much pleasure in thy writings and conversation. I console myself, however, with the belief, or rather the knowledge, that God, who is the great Head of the heavenly family, requires for the service of His vast household a few at least who can be harsh to the harsh and stern to the stern." But however harshly the good man may have comported himself in his writings, no reader, especially of his letters, can fail to see that he could be above all measure

[1] 1 Kings, xix.

gentle and affectionate. Old Master Mathesius, who for many years sat at his table, and had daily intercourse with him, bears this testimony: "He was sharp with those who were sharp, and bore himself towards others as they did towards him; but any who were about him, and had the benefit of his consolations, kind offices, and prayers, can testify with truth that his was a gentle and modest spirit."

How difficult it is for the children of men to keep in the right track! If in ten instances they have gone to excess with their noise and bluster, their threatenings and abuse, they try to do better in the eleventh by holding their peace like dumb dogs when they ought to speak out—calling what is black white, and practising generosity at the expense of God. It is true, as Luther has said, that "the world is like a thistle-head, which always points its prickles up on whatever side you choose to turn it." How earnest, therefore, ought to be the prayer of the sincere disciple, that the Lord Jesus would be pleased to take him into His school and teach him the right time when to speak and when to keep silence, when to be angry and when to show affection, when to strive and when to forbear! Oh how greatly I wish not to be numbered among those who, for the sake of being friends with the world, become enemies to God, and in place of prosecuting His holy wars prefer false peace, and tarry at home with wife and child! Fain would I, were it but the Lord's will, attach myself as the last and humblest member to that holy train of prophets and martyrs who "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of the world."[1] Bitterly did men hate and persecute our Lord, though He was the all-perfect pattern of wisdom, gentleness, and modesty; and I know that if I confess His name before them, the disciple in this respect also will not be above his Master. At the same time, I would fain keep in mind the injunction of the apostle: "See that ye walk *circumspectly*, not as fools but as wise,"[2] "especially towards them that are without."[3] And again, "If it be pos-

[1] Heb. xi. 26; xii. 1. [2] Eph. v. 15. [3] Col. iv. 5.

sible, *as much as lieth in you*, live peaceably with all men."[1] And once more, "Let your *moderation* be known unto all men."[2] Moreover, I know that the beatitude, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you," has the word "*falsely*" for its adjunct. I desire, therefore, with my whole heart to possess that spirit of peace, gentleness, and meekness which likes a thousand times better to bless than to punish. I know the stormy impatience of my heart. I know how difficult a task it is for me to sympathise with the foibles of my brethren as if they were my own, and how the flesh often deludes us into the belief that we are contending for God when we are thinking only of ourselves. How, then, shall I attain to such a right, meek, and gentle spirit? How shall I acquire the calm composure from which no action emanates which has not been proved by the eye of God, and upon which the divine amen has not imprinted its seal? In my opinion, the most effectual means is to allow the Holy Spirit to write every morning afresh upon the heart the words, "*By grace are ye saved, and that not of yourselves.*"[3]

If gentle grace have touched the heart,
 It bids the passions cease,
Bids the foul brood of wrath depart,
 And tunes the mind to peace.

For He who healed men's feud with heaven,
 And bought my pardon too,
Has made the debt to me forgiven,
 By me to others due.

And now, however vile they be,
 I own my *flesh and blood*,
And for the guiltiest whom I see
 Count not myself too good.

Tender and soft my heart has grown,
 Patient and kind to all;
The rays from the bright model thrown
 Upon the copy fall.

[1] Rom. xii. 18. [2] Phil. iv. 5. [3] Eph. ii. 8; Matt. xviii. 23-35.

And so, as if all war were o'er,
I gladly sheathe the sword,
Determined ne'er to draw it more
Save at Thy bidding, Lord.

And for this reason, O heavenly Father, grant that when in the presence of an adversary I may never forget the magnitude of the debt which Thou hast mercifully remitted to me. On my own part I must forgive all, forget all, and endure all at his hands. Only when from the bottom of my heart I am prepared to say that I have no longer an enemy upon the earth—only then, O my God and Father, am I worthy to bear arms in Thy wars—only then am I capable of fighting with a truly *holy zeal.* Yes: the flesh will often deceive me into the belief that I am wielding the sword for Thy honour when I am doing it solely for my own; and I know that soldiers who fight with a zeal so impure do more harm than good to Thy cause. Enlighten, therefore, mine eye, that I may always be able to distinguish in my bosom the fire that burns for Thee from that which burns for myself.

55.

Put away Lying, and speak Truth.

Oh no! I WOULD NOT TELL A LIE,
Though one false word the world could gain;
Fleeting and false all gains that I
On other ways than God's obtain.

God cannot lie, and therefore if
A lie for me a crown could win,
Or save from instant death my life,
I WOULD NOT STOOP TO SUCH A SIN.

PSALM XV. 1, 2. "Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh up-

rightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart."

EPH. iv. 25. "Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another."

ACTS, v. 1-11. "But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. And great fear came upon all the Church, and upon as many as heard these things."

UPON me, too, comes great fear when I read this history of Ananias and Sapphira; and every one who reads it surely must say, "How black a sin lying must be in the eyes of God!" Nor can it be its injurious consequences which make it so black, for what injury ensued from the lie of

Ananias and his wife? Not on account of the loss done thereby to the Church of the Lord does the apostle inflict the punishment; that loss he does not even mention, but rather says: "Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?" It is not, therefore, the injury which he rebukes, it is the mere *lie*: "*Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.*" That they had *told a lie*, and intended thereby to deceive the *servants of God*—this is the subject of his censure. Even in its own nature, therefore, lying must be the offspring of darkness. If it were not, how could it happen that once over the lips it recoils with such a weight upon the heart? It is so small a word, and slips so glibly from the tongue, and yet the moment it is uttered it falls back like a mountain upon the heart and almost crushes it.

> Out on a lie! it has no power like truth
> To lift the burden from the labouring breast.

If, then, it be not its injurious consequences which blacken it—if it be already *black at its birth into the world*—no *advantage* to be reaped from it can ever wash it white. Why should *falsehood* be the only thing which expediency can purge from black to white? What! shall expediency make honourable a coward lie and not do the same for every other, perhaps even more sturdy, offspring of the womb of darkness? Why not also for deceit, incontinence, theft, and daring murder itself? What sort of a privilege can cowardly lying, and it alone, possess? Expediency! Well, if that be the haven towards which the little bark of your virtue steers its course, I am not surprised that it is wrecked a thousand times before it arrives; for, methinks, virtue and prosperity are two buds which we do not often find growing upon one stalk. And especially with respect to *truth*. Is not that the commodity which at all times has had fewest customers in the market? Has it not always been found, as the proverb says, that "He who plays tunes upon truth will have the instrument broken over his head;" and again, "He that speaks the truth will have short notice to quit his quarters"? Indeed it must also

be said that truth is far too high-minded to be satisfied merely with the estimation paid to it on the score of its utility. Would not the case be that of the sun borrowing a candle to help people to see its brightness? If it be not an accidental rhyme, "Be *true* and *rue*," neither is it accidental that *right* chimes with *bright*. Yes, sacred truth, thou art bright in thyself, and thou art holy in thyself. Never since I first heard it has the following saying departed from my mind: "If the world were suspended upon the thread of a lie, and I knew the word of truth which would cut that thread in twain, that word would I pronounce, although the world and all created things were to drop into the abyss."

Does *God* ever pretend to be other than He is? are not all His ways truth? *God Himself is truth*, and he who sins against truth sins against God. That is enough to make the word of truth sacred to me. I need none of the arguments which others allege, such as that our Maker has given speech to man in order that it might be the picture of his thought, and that therefore lying is a sin against the purpose of God, and the use for which speech was destined; that it is an abuse of confidence and charity towards our neighbour, who takes it for granted that we use speech for the purpose which it was intended to subserve. These arguments may be good in their place. Enough for me to say with David, "O Lord, Thou art God, and Thy words be true;"[1] and being the servant of the Lord, I will walk on no other path but His. Moreover, I see what becomes of those who try to bargain for an abatement of the truth. The stone cannot be stopped which has once begun to roll down the hill, and one lie produces seven. If you are to consider good reasons a sufficient excuse for passing off a lie—ah me! how cheap these are, especially when furnished by a wicked heart! I never saw a thief use his light fingers who had not good reasons to plead for doing so, although the only true one might have been that his fingers *itched*. Let the conscience have become so relaxed as to sell

[1] 2 Sam. vii. 28.

its consent for what are called good reasons, and I know of nothing which it will not sell. Rather will I say with the poet,—

> "The conscience which men pliant call,
> Is much the same as none at all."

No doubt Ananias and Sapphira had their good reasons for keeping back part of the money. Peter, too, had his, when he falsely swore that he did not know the Son of man. Had not even Judas good reasons when he betrayed Him? I affirm that if a man wishes to sell himself to the devil he has only to begin by crediting his *good reasons*. I have often paid attention, both in myself and others, to the way in which the devil spins his thread. At first we observe that we are about to affirm to ourselves what is not true, and are still somewhat afraid. In a little time the thing appears to us not unlikely, and after a few minutes more the net is drawn together and the bird caught. Such is almost always the process when a lie comes to a man and asks a passport dictated by itself.

Dear Master, a monstrous sophist dwells in my heart, and he has an inexhaustible treasure of excuses for everything that is well-pleasing to the old Adam within me. Protect me from the good reasons of the devil, and make the *word of truth* sacred in my eyes.

There is probably no one who would not be alarmed were he calmly to reflect upon the enormous amount of lies which men tell to each other. They confess that this is dishonourable, and are ashamed of themselves; but they do not give up the practice, and *when they return to the company of their fellows* begin *to lie* afresh. The taste of truth is very bitter, and they will not have it otherwise. We have here a new instance of the slave who desires to be delivered from his chain, but who, because the chain is of gold, is fain to keep hold of it still. Never am I so struck with the extraordinary degree in which falsehood prevails among men, as when I figure to myself the terror which would overwhelm a company if their breasts were at once to become transparent, so that

they could read what was passing in each other's hearts. The following story is told: When Ottacar, King of Bohemia, ventured to take arms against the Emperor Rudolf, and when the two armies—the German and the Bohemian—already confronted each other, the King deemed it more advisable, after all, to tender the oath of allegiance to the Emperor, but only before the magnates of the realm, and inside of the imperial tent. He came for the purpose, but had scarce dropped upon his knee before the throne when a rope was drawn and the four sides of the tent fell to the ground, exposing the haughty monarch in this humiliating posture to the view of all the people. Were the walls which hide the secrets of our breasts suddenly to collapse, of a truth our terror would scarcely be less; and yet they who thus lie one to another are *brethren, members of one body!*

It appears, indeed, that between truth on one side and falsehood on the other, men have built a bridge, which they call a *white lie.* And what is it that they thereby mean? Do they in general mean anything else than a lie *for which they have some good reason?* The virtue of truthfulness, in the opinion of the world, is the difficult virtue of *never lying without a purpose and object.* If, however, under the banner of white lies, the privilege of free entrance and issue be given to all lies which are profitable to one's purse and dear self, no honest man can doubt who the captain is under whom such persons are serving.

There are, indeed, certain intricate cases in which even a Christian conscience may feel somewhat perplexed what to do; for example, when a lie of this kind is presented to it as *a duty of charity towards a brother*, and when that brother's welfare or life is to be purchased by the false coin. If it be lawful—nay, obligatory—for me to sacrifice *life* for a brother, why may I not likewise sacrifice *truth?* I can easily imagine that an upright soul is as conscious of *making a sacrifice* when in such a case it sacrifices *truth*, as when it sacrifices life and health for the brethren, and that it suffers in so doing the *pain of self-*

denial; and I would not be the man to cast the first stone upon a lie *of that description.* Only I think that if it were written in His Word, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down truth and righteousness for us; and we ought to lay down truth and righteousness for the brethren,"—I repeat, were these the words of Scripture, in place of the words of Scripture being as they are—"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His *life* for us; and we ought to lay down our life for the brethren"[1]—all would then be well. Inasmuch, however, as in laying down his life for the brethren He laid it down *for the truth*, I am of opinion that the kind of lie of which we speak has no exemplification in Christ the Lord, and that truth must be a higher good than health and life itself. It is a bad affair when men make of it a funnel; for though the mouth may be little at the first, it will grow larger in time. Rather ought it, as I think, to be a *ring*, which if broken in a single place is no longer whole. *Lying and cheating* are nearly related; and I do not see how it is possible innocently to lie for the brethren, and not also innocently to cheat and steal for them, like the worthy cobbler Crispin, who purloined the leather of the rich, by whom the loss was unfelt, in order to make shoes for the poor. There are many, no doubt, who are benevolent and generous at the expense of God; but that they thereby earn His gratitude is greatly to be questioned. If, according to His will, we ourselves ought to be ready to undergo anything rather than consent to do wrong, ought not the same principle to regulate our deportment towards our brethren? Supposing that by a lie I could save the property, or wife, or child, or life of a brother, how do I know that under all circumstances I would thereby be really doing him good? But that truth is a good in itself I know full well. When the venerable Athanasius was fleeing from his persecutors, he was overtaken in the desert, and asked if "he was Athanasius." He reasoned with himself that the preservation of so noble a pillar of truth in the temple of His Church must be of far

[1] 1 John, iii. 16.

greater consequence to God than the poor and diminutive monosyllable *yes;* and he answered *no.* The worthy bishop was indeed a pillar in the Lord's temple ; but how did he know that the Lord, who, in the words of John the Baptist, "is able to raise up children *from the stones,*" had not other pillars at His command? Does not history testify aloud that the blood of the martyrs has at all times been the richest fertiliser of the soil of the Church? Was not John Huss, that noble witness of the truth, likewise a pillar in the temple, and one which the Church of the age appeared little able to spare? And yet was not his death a far more effective trumpet-call in behalf of Gospel truth than his life could ever possibly have been? I am convinced that in the Lord's battles it is better and also more pleasing to Him that we should suffer defeat, than that we should wield arms upon which He has not pronounced His blessing. After all, who knows for certain what in any case is *best?* We are told of a persecutor who once questioned a daughter where her father was. She had seen him take refuge in a chamber; but she replied he was in the *garden,* and into that he had just escaped through the chamber-window, and so fell into the hands of his pursuers.

It is no doubt true that persons, both male and female, who served and worshipped God, and to whom holy Scripture accords a high testimonial for piety, have acted otherwise. Abraham did so, when to the kings of Egypt and of Gerar he represented Sarah, not as his wife, but as his sister. (It is true that she was also his half-sister.[1]) So did Samuel when he went up to Bethlehem to offer sacrifice, but likewise to anoint David, and only said that he went up to offer sacrifice.[2] So did the midwives of Egypt when they rescued the babes of Israel from the wrath of the king.[3] So did Rahab, when, prompted by her faith in the true God, she concealed the spies.[4] Nay, even Paul did not tell the *whole* truth when he affirmed before the council that it was for preaching the resur-

[1] Gen. xii. 13; xx. 5.
[2] 1 Sam. xvi. 2 *et seq.*
[3] Exod. i. 19, 20.
[4] Heb. xi. 31.

rection from the dead that he was arraigned before them.[1] But what follows from this? Among all of women born has there ever been more than one who was able to say, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" Was even Paul so great a saint as not to need daily to pray, "Forgive us our debts, and lead us not into temptation"? As I have already said, I will not be the man to cast a stone at any one who in the hour of temptation, and in the interest of his brethren, or even in his own, has allowed an untruthful word to escape from his lips. He who has not faith to believe that all things must work together for good to them that love God, and who does not, in obedience to His commandments, unhesitatingly shrink from sin more than from any amount of misfortune,—I repeat, he who has not such strength of faith has no alternative in the hour of temptation save to act as he thinks best, although it behoves to be done in ways that are not good. Perhaps it is even more advisable, on the whole, not to expect that persons so timid and weak in faith will speak the truth at all. If they once conceive that it is their *duty* to take upon themselves to govern—although on crooked ways—the course of events, and consult for their own and their brethren's good, may we not apply to them the text, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin"?[2] When to the question, "Art *thou* the man?" asked in the face of the murderer's dagger, only a feeble and trembling *yes* is heard, in place of the *I am* of joyful faith, it is perhaps more consonant with the whole spiritual condition of such a man to utter what his unbelieving timorous heart suggests, and then to go into his closet and earnestly pray to God to give him *a greater measure of faith*, for the lack of which there can be no excuse. For myself, at least, I would not as confessor torment the conscience of one who, on a sick-bed, for instance, was guilty of a prevarication. From weakness of faith we every day do so much that is wrong, that our only way is humbly and penitently to sum it up in the prayer, "Forgive us our debts." I would, however, say to him, Dear brother, may the

[1] Acts, xxiii. 6. [2] Rom. xiv. 23.

Lord the God of might vouchsafe to thee such faith as never for a moment to doubt that what happens to thee, or to any other child of man, when walking in *the straight way*, is *always for the best.*

All depends upon acquiring a right *taste* for truth, and he who means to be truthful towards *men*, must begin by being truthful towards *God* and towards *himself.* If, in those hours in which he presents himself calmly in the divine presence, he does not seek to be truthful, and has not learned to cast away all those specious reasons, pretexts, and excuses which are the false coin of the devil, to that person never will truth be sacred in his intercourse with his fellow-men. If we only observe how men shrink from appearing face to face, without veil or disguise, before the Lord, we will not wonder for a moment that in their intercourse with each other they do not lay aside the mask. If there be one thing of which I am deeply and unalterably convinced, it is, that only in proportion as we are sincere towards the Lord our God, will we be also sincere one towards another.

Lord, in all acts and words of Thine
Did Thy bright soul reflected shine
 As in a mirror's face;
And never once did Thy lips part
But to reveal Thine inmost heart,
 That fount of truth and grace.
O grant that I may ever be
Guileless and truthful, still like Thee;
That so in all I do may shine
My inmost heart, as once did Thine.

For if the fruit of truth I bear,
And on Thine image bright and fair
 My inward eye I stay,
All that I do shall well succeed;
Thou wilt direct my every deed,
 And ne'er my trust betray.
Yet who can say or see
What's best for him to be?
So be the issue what it may,
Childlike Thy Word I will obey.

56.

Be subject unto the higher Powers.

That by the grace of God the Lord
They reign, all kings avow;
And in God's name to bear the sword
Is no small grace, I trow.

Yet he who wields the sword at will,
Will sometimes smite awry;
And that an upright heart will fill
With grief and misery.

So God I thank, who chose for me
A subject's humbler part,
And ask for him who KING *must be,*
Both a stout hand and heart.

Rom. xiii. 1. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God."

FAITH in Christ purifies and establishes not only hearts, but houses and families, and in like manner governments and states. Oh, how much more firmly do their crowns sit upon the heads of the mighty when upheld by *faith* than when merely by soldiery and police! How profound and worthy of reverence the doctrine respecting the magistracy which the Gospel inculcates! It tells us that "the powers that be are ordained of God," and that the magistrate is "His minister." And since they have learned to believe the Gospel, sovereigns, in compliance with that lesson, have styled themselves, as they still do, "*By the grace of God.*" What title more *honourable*, and at the same time more *humble*, can there be? By it, no doubt, they boldly avouch that they owe their dignity not to the ignoble hand and institution of man, but to

the omnipotent hand of the Supreme. At the same time, they humbly confess that if their exaltation had depended upon their own strength and prudence, they never could have achieved it, and that therefore none should arrogate thanks or praise to himself, but ascribe these singly and solely to the King of kings. Does not this title draw, as it were, a distinction betwixt that which a man is of himself and that which God has been pleased to make him? Is it not as if the monarch meant thereby to say, I, Frederick, George, or Albert, am indeed a man like all the rest of you; but by the grace of God I have been clothed with a robe to which you must pay respect, as I myself do, not for my own sake, but for His who has put it on me? It is a beautiful story which is told of the Emperor Maximilian, for whose observation some one had written upon the wall—

> "When Adam delved and Eve span,
> Where was then the gentleman?"

Beneath it the pious emperor wrote—

> "I am a man, as others be;
> My honours God hath given to me."

We mean not to affirm that none but monarchs are what they are by the grace of God, or that *to the grace of God subjects*, both *citizens* and *peasants*, are not equally beholden; for, as Luther says, "every rank and condition has something of its own to *boast of* before God," thereby signifying that it has been favoured in one shape or another. All we mean to affirm is, that divine grace has poured a much richer measure of gifts and privileges upon the great and mighty of the earth than upon other ranks of men. In fact, rulers have been instituted for no less a purpose than *in the name of God to exercise justice upon the earth.* For this end a sword has been put into their hand, and they have been gifted with a far larger share of power; because for him whose office it is to protect the innocent and punish the evil-doer it is not enough that he merely

hold in one hand the book of the law—he must likewise by all means bear the sword in the other. And, according to the word of the apostle, such divine authority pertains to every magistracy under which a regular government has been established in a nation, and to which men have sworn the oath of allegiance. Nor does it make any difference whether the magistracy be of thy religious persuasion or not, nor whether it have originated lawfully or by violence. If in God's stead it sits in judgment against unrighteousness, and maintains intact the rights of property among men, and the reign of peace and order in cities and private houses, and if thou hast sworn fealty and obedience to it in the sight of God, then it is thy magistracy, and with its origin, whatever that may have been, thou hast nothing to do. God has given it the power, and to that power thou hast paid homage. "He is not the author of confusion, but of peace,"[1] and they who maintain order in families and nations are His officers. For that reason St Paul here says, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers;" and in like manner St Peter exhorts,—"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for *the Lord's sake:* whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by Him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well."[2]

Verses 2-4. "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."

[1] 1 Cor. xiv. 33. [2] 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14.

All that, you will say, is well spoken by the apostle, in as far as it refers to such a magistracy as is not an object of terror to *good* works, but only to the *evil*, and is a revenger to execute wrath upon the *evil-doer*. But you will further allege that there are many among the powers that be who do the very contrary of this, who are a terror to *good* works, but not to the *evil*, and who bear the sword for the punishment of them *that do well*. Now, beyond all question, the beloved apostle was of opinion that when the mighty whom the Lord has invested with power do the contrary of that which as magistrates they were appointed to do, the Christian people should yet beware of attempting to wrest the sceptre from their hand, and should rather follow the apostle Peter's exhortation to servants, when he says, "Be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the *froward*. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God."[1] To the same effect the Old Testament admonishes: "My son, fear thou the Lord and the king; and meddle not with them that are given to change."[2] Was it not in the reign of that savage tyrant Nero that the apostle Paul wrote his doctrine respecting the authority of the powers that be? and was it not by Nero's command that he, and likewise St Peter, sealed their faith with the blood of martyrdom? and yet, although a Nero did then so grimly rage, and both personally and by his deputies and officers pervert justice in a thousand cases, did not one of his captains testify, "It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him"?[3] Even under a Nero, therefore, things never came to such a pass that the magistracy degenerated into its very opposite, prais-

[1] 1 Pet. ii. 18-20. [2] Prov. xxiv. 21. [3] Acts, xxv. 16.

ing and rewarding with office and honour perjurers and thieves and defamers, and putting the honest man to death upon the gibbet. So long, then, as a magistrate, though in many a case and in many a place he do turn right into wrong, does yet in general uphold the distinction between mine and thine—so long as the thief and the murderer are punished, and care taken of the public weal, wilt thou, for the wrong which may be done to thee, and perhaps to many more,—wilt thou, I repeat, because here and there a stone drops out and a rent is made in a house which God has built, undertake, at thine own risk, to pull it down and set up another in its place? Surely thou wilt rather leave that task to the Architect who built it. Believe me, He will not be a quite passive spectator; and although He may not approve of His *children* putting forth their hands, His jailers and hangmen will not be wanting. For were there to be a magistracy which wholly forgot the function for which it was instituted, it would soon fall into the pit which it had dug for others, and be strangled in the snare with which it had strangled its subjects. "*Wheresoever the carcass is*," said our Lord, "*there shall the eagles be gathered together*." And what else but a putrefying carcass would a state be in which the magistracy had dropt the reins from their grasp and allowed confusion to take the place of order? Although not one Christian should put forth his hand, there would not fail to be mobs, and what Luther wrote to the revolted peasantry would take place. "God," he said, "is the enemy of both alike—the tyrants and the mobs—and hounds them upon each other that they may both shamefully perish, and so His wrath and sentence be executed upon the ungodly." "For," as he says in another passage, "He is a master in *the art* of setting one thief to buffet another, without which it would be impossible to find halters and gibbets enough for the purpose." Although Christian men keep quiet and submit to much, there will always be plenty of hot heads in the world, who, in the case of a magistracy behaving too badly, will stir up riots and do service as a scourge in the hand of God. A

pious sovereign said long ago, "Power is like a child, which, when not guided by discretion, behaves insolently, and stumbles and falls of itself."

In the self-same strain as the holy apostle did Luther also advise, when the peasantry in Swabia were for rising in tumult and rebellion. "You allege," he said to them, "that the powers that be are too bad to be endured. They will not permit us to have the Gospel, and they cruelly oppress us by damaging our properties, and so they destroy both soul and body. I answer, The wickedness and injustice of the powers that be do not excuse riot and insurrection, because to punish the wicked belongs to no private person, but to the civil authorities. It is also a natural and universal law, that nobody ought to be or can be judge and avenger in his own cause. For there is truth in the proverb that 'he who returns a blow does wrong.' And with this the divine law is consonant, which says, '*To me belongeth vengeance and recompense.*'"[1] Moreover, when his friends complained to him that the rulers gave no vigorous support to the Word, nor applied any forcible check to the Papacy, he warns them against destroying the work of God by rioting, and says: "Although it were practicable to raise a rebellion, that method is of no use, and never brings the amendment which is sought, inasmuch as *rebellion is without understanding, and usually injures the innocent more than the guilty.* For this reason it is in all cases wrong, however right the ground of it may be, and is always followed by far greater damage than improvement, verifying the proverb that Out of evil comes worse. Besides, it is forbidden by God in express terms, when He says, "*That which is just shalt thou follow justly.*"[2] Why should not God permit an intolerable and often unrighteous magistracy to lord it over a country, when He permits wicked and unrighteous parents to rule their children, and harsh and intolerable husbands their helpless and unresisting wives? It is expressly written in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, "*I will give children*

[1] Deut. xxxii. 35.

[2] Deut. xvi. 20—Luther's vers.

to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them."[1] And again, "*I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath.*"[2] In this manner God can convert the sovereign into the *executioner* of a people, in order that perchance under his strokes they may come to themselves, and in their tribulation turn to Him who is the supreme King of kings, that He may look into the matter and put a stop to the affliction of the land. And, in my opinion, an executioner thus appointed by the *grace of God* is generally much more tolerable than when peasants, *by efforts of their own*, rise to become princes, as the proverb has so truly said,—

> "A clown, if raised above his sphere,
> Will sharper than a razor shear."

It is true that even the apostles have emitted a saying from which it may be inferred that they did not, at least absolutely, disapprove of rebellion; for the apostle Peter, in company with John, declared before the Sanhedrim, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye."[3] This saying has oftener than once been thrown like a firebrand among the populace, to kindle insurrection and uproar. But did ever Peter or John, or any other of our Lord's disciples in the Church, lift an armed hand against the Council of Jerusalem? Only read what they did upon the occasion referred to. Yes, *they came together, and their hands they lifted up*, not, however, *against the magistrates* by whom they had been threatened, but to the Lord God of heaven and earth, while they prayed this prayer: "*And now, Lord, behold their threatenings; and grant unto Thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak Thy word.*" To refuse obedience when the powers that be command thee to do some ungodly thing, to suffer them to tear thee to pieces rather than act contrary to God's express command, is a very different thing from lifting hand and sword against them, and inciting others to do the same. And to this effect writes Luther as

[1] Isa. iii. 4. [2] Hos. xiii. 11. [3] Acts, iv. 19.

follows: "If thy prince or temporal sovereign order thee to be friends with the Pope, and to believe this or that doctrine, and insist upon your putting away your religious books, you ought to say to him, 'Lucifer has no right to sit opposite to God. Sire, I am under obligation to obey thee with my life and goods—and with any order, within the limit of thy power on earth, I will comply; but I will not obey when thou tellest me what to believe and what to reject, for then thou playest the tyrant, and intrudest into a sphere where thou hast neither right nor power.' If, thereupon, thy prince deprive thee of thy property and punish thee for disobedience, blessed art thou. Thank God, who counts thee worthy to suffer for His holy Word; but let the prince alone—he is a fool, and will not fail to find his judge. But if thou dost not gainsay him, and permittest him to rob thee of thy faith or thy books, then verily thou hast defrauded God. Let me give an instance. In Meisen, Bavaria, and other places, the tyrants have issued an order to the people to come and deliver up their New Testaments at the public offices. In such a case how ought subjects to act? Their duty is not to part with a single page or letter, if they would not forfeit their salvation. If orders are given to visit their houses, and forcibly to take either their property or their books, they ought to submit. In place of resisting, they should patiently endure violence; but neither sanction, nor serve, nor follow, nor obey it either one foot or one finger's breadth." This is what is called *passive resistance*, and in this way a Christian may act as often as his conscience bids him. It is what Christ the Lord himself did, of whom it is written, that "when He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but *committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously*."[1]

There is another point, however, to which we would direct attention. It is, that the apostle has here, for the purpose of punishing, put into the hands of the magistracy not merely a *rod*, but a *sword*, and means thereby to intimate, that when

[1] 1 Peter, ii. 23.

sin has been carried to its utmost length, to the same length *punishment* both ought to and must proceed, and that in place of the prison and the scourge, the magistracy must have recourse to the sword and the gibbet. Now there are many weak hearts who cannot bear this, as among the early Christians there were pious souls who preferred resiling from the divinely-appointed office of magistracy with which their fellow-citizens wished to invest them, rather than run the risk of having to pronounce sentence of death upon malefactors, an act of which, thinking it sinful, they were nervously afraid. And although Paul has here, in express terms, armed the magistracy with the sword for the punishment of evil-doers—although our Lord Himself averred that "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword"[1]—although the Old Testament Scriptures have enjoined, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed,"[2]—these persons chose rather to expound such texts in a non-natural sense than to deprive a human being of life; and for the same reason denounced *war* as a work absolutely displeasing to God. Now, without doubt, it is an unspeakably great calamity that there are men walking the earth who are not afraid to shed the blood of another made like themselves after the image of God, and who do not scruple, with arms in their hands, to rob brethren of their properties and hunt them out of house and home. Inasmuch, however, as there are those who dare to *perpetrate* such crimes, it is certain that a Christian magistrate ought not to be afraid *to make them feel the sharpness of the sword.* Having been appointed by God as His minister to execute justice, he is bound to *retaliate;* and if he do it at all, he must have the power of inflicting such punishment as he certainly knows will have the effect of clearly manifesting the retaliation in the sight of men, and imprinting it upon their consciences.

Moreover, as by their police and officers of law the ruling powers dispense retribution to their own subjects, so by their military they do the same to other powers by whom their sub-

[1] Matt. xxvi. 52. [2] Gen. ix. 6.

jects are violently assailed. In this there is no kind of anger, revenge, or inward enmity, because the very reason why God has taken the right to punish out of the hand of private individuals is, that these might have either too little power or too much blind passion for the purpose—and has committed it into the hands of magistrates, who ought to punish impartially and according to that which is right in the eyes of God. To this effect Luther writes as follows: "Whoever is appointed to exercise the civil government, is under command to resent and punish and kill wherever anything that is wrong and worthy of death has been committed by the subjects. In the same manner are the father and mother in a family specially enjoined by God not to laugh at the transgressions of their children and domestics, but to reprove and scrupulously punish them. God commands them to do so; and when they leave it undone, they disobey and act contrary to their office and instructions. For this reason we are not to understand that a thief should say to his judge, 'Don't hang me; for in the sixth commandment it is written, Thou shalt not kill.' He may say that to his equal who is not in office, but not to magistrates who are commanded to use the sword for the prevention of evil. In like manner it would never do for a maid in a family, when guilty of waste, negligence, or sloth, to say to her mistress, 'Dear lady, you are a Christian; remember the sixth commandment, and don't scold me, for that is forbidden, and Christ says, Whosoever is angry with his brother is in danger of the judgment.' No, my girl, God has here enjoined a very different thing; you are a servant, and bound diligently to attend to the duties of your office, and to do as you are bid. If you refuse, it behoves your mistress not to recompense and praise, but to correct you. And this has been devolved by God as a duty, not merely upon masters and mistresses in the family, but also upon magistrates in the civil government. And such 'wrath' as we have described unchristianises them just as little as does their office and vocation. They would, however, cease to be Christians were they to relinquish their

office, drop the reins of government, whether in the family or the state, and idly look on while the children and domestics ruled the house, or the subjects did evil at their pleasure."

Again he says, in another passage, "You ask whether it be lawful for a Christian to wield the temporal sword and punish evil-doers, seeing that Christ has so plainly and peremptorily told us not to resist evil that the sophists have thought themselves obliged to make a maxim of it? I answer thus, You have two things inculcated—one, that among real Christians the sword can have no place, and therefore you cannot wield it either over or yet among them, because it is not needed. For that reason you must transfer your question elsewhere to the great mass who are not Christians, and ask, Can you as a Christian use it there? The other thing inculcated is, that you are bound to be serviceable to the sword, and help it in every way you can with your body and soul, your wealth and credit, because, although this be a work of which you yourself have no need, it is of the utmost use and necessity to the world at large and to thy neighbour. Accordingly, if thou see that there is a lack of hangmen, constables, judges, magistrates, and princes, and find thyself competent for any such employment, it is thy duty to undertake and apply for it, in order that the necessary power may not be despised, nor wax feeble and perish, for the world neither can nor will perform such service with success. Thy inducement should be that, in this case, thou enterest upon a wholly foreign service and labour which is of no benefit to thyself, either as regards fortune or honour, but is beneficial to thy neighbour and other men, and that thou undertakest it for that reason, and without any view of avenging thyself or recompensing evil for evil. So far as thou thyself art concerned, thou adherest to the Gospel and compliest with the Word of Christ, turning to him who smites thee on the one cheek the other also, and allowing him who has taken away thy cloak to take also thy coat, wherever thou and thine own interest only are concerned. In this way the two things agree nicely with each other: thou satisfiest at once the kingdom of

God and the kingdom of the world, and that both inwardly and outwardly — submitting to evil and injustice, and at the same time punishing both; resisting, and at the same time not resisting, evil; for in the one case thou lookest to thyself and to thine own things, and in the other to thy neighbour and to his things. In this way have all the saints, from the beginning of the world, wielded the sword—*Adam* and his whole posterity. So did *Abraham* wield it when he rescued Lot, his brother's son, and smote the four kings,[1] although he was in every respect an evangelical man. So, too, did the holy prophet *Samuel* when he slew Agag;[2] and so did *Elijah*, when he put to death the prophets of Baal.[3] In the same way the sword was wielded by Moses and Joshua, and the children of Israel, Samson, David, and all the kings and princes of the Old Testament; and the same may be said of Daniel and his companions Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah at Babylon, and likewise Joseph in Egypt; and so on. Were any one, however, to allege that the Old Testament has been abrogated, and is no longer of any force, and therefore that such examples may not be set up for Christians to imitate, I answer that such is not the case, and that we can also prove our point by the New Testament. *John the Baptist*[4] is there a notable instance, for without doubt it behoved him to testify and show forth and teach concerning Christ. In other words, it behoved his doctrine to be purely evangelical, inasmuch as he was commissioned to prepare for the Lord a righteous and obedient people. Now this same John sanctions the office of soldiers, telling them to *be content with their wages;* whereas, if it had been unchristian to wield the sword, he would have reproved them for doing so, and ordered them to cast away both it and their pay, otherwise he would not have rightly instructed them in the requirements of Christianity. *St Peter* also, when he preached Christ to *Cornelius*,[5] did not tell him to resign his commission, which he ought to have done, sup-

[1] Gen. xiv. 14, 15. [2] 1 Sam. xv. 33. [3] 1 Kings, xviii. 40.
[4] Luke, iii. 14. [5] Acts, x. 34.

posing it had been any hindrance to his status as a Christian. Moreover, it was before Cornelius was baptised that the Holy Ghost came upon him; and even before the discourse of St Peter that St Luke praises him as a righteous man, and does not blame him for being the captain of soldiers in the pay of a heathen emperor. We have a similar example in the Ethiopian *eunuch*,[1] whom the evangelist Philip converted and baptised, permitting him to retain his office and to return home. And yet, without the power of the sword, the eunuch could not have been so efficient an officer to his queen. The same was likewise the case with *Paulus Sergius*,[2] the deputy in Cyprus, whom Paul converted, and yet allowed to retain his military command over the heathen. The same was done by many holy martyrs who were obedient to the emperors at Rome, went to war under them, and doubtless also slew many in order to maintain peace, as is related of St Maurice, Achatius, Gereon, and many more under the Emperor Julian. But, over and above, here lies a clear and strong text of St Paul,[3] who says, '*The powers that be are ordained of God;*' likewise that *the ruler beareth not the sword in vain, but is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath upon him who doeth evil.*' My friend, be not so impious as to say that a Christian ought not to engage in what is essentially a work commanded and instituted by God; for then must thou also affirm that a Christian should not eat and drink nor marry a wife. That is equally God's work and ordinance; and if it be so, then it is good: and it is also good that a man use it in a Christian way, and for his salvation, according to the saying of St Paul, 'Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused by those who believe and know the truth.'[4] Among the things which God hath created you must not include merely meat and drink, and clothes and shoes, but also magistracy and subjection, protection and punishment; and to sum up all, seeing that St Paul here tells us that *the ruling power is the minister of God*, it must not be left to the heathen alone, but exercised by all men. When it

[1] Acts, viii. 39. [2] Acts, xiii. 7, 12. [3] Rom. xiii. 1. [4] 1 Tim. iv. 4.

is said that it is the *minister of God*, what else is meant but that it is by nature of a kind capable of being used in His service? It would be a very unchristian style of speech were we to affirm that there was any way of serving God which a Christian man could not, or ought not to adopt, seeing that the service of God is proper for no one so much as for a Christian; and it were a happy and a needful thing if all princes were really good Christians—for to such, in preference to all other persons in the world, do the use of the sword and the exercise of power belong as a peculiar divine worship. And thus it stands indisputably firm and beyond all misapprehension that,

> *For God's own word and Fatherland,*
> *'Tis right to take the sword in hand."*

Verse 5. "Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake."

Inasmuch as the magistracy has been deemed worthy by God Himself of so high a vocation—inasmuch as they have not taken to themselves the sword, but have had it put into their hand by Almighty God, it is the more needful, *for conscience' sake*, to be subject to them. If thou wert subject to a robber who had unexpectedly got thee into his power, and shouldst obey his commands, thou wouldst do so from the mere fear of punishment, for into his hands Almighty God has not put the sword; nor is it in the service of divine justice that he wields it. If, however, thou permittest thy property to be taken by an unrighteous magistracy without lifting thy hand, thou doest it in the same way as a child submits to many an injustice on the part of his father when angry, and submits for this reason, that God hath given to his father a father's authority. And as Paul here requires us to be subject for conscience' sake, so does St Peter likewise exhort, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man *for the Lord's sake*."[1]

[1] 1 Peter, ii. 13.

Verses 6, 7. "For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."

This is the lesson which Christ the Lord also taught when He looked upon the penny imprinted with the emperor's image and said, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's."[1] And the drift of His words was this: The bit of metal on which the emperor has caused his image to be stamped testifies thereby that it is the emperor's, and may be given back to him; but a totally different image—*the image of Almighty God*—has been imprinted upon the human heart; and testifying as that does that it belongs exclusively to Him, the human heart is subject to no other power, and must serve Him alone.

Oh how cheerfully will a faithful subject pay tribute and custom to the ruling powers when he reflects on all the care and watching which they must endure for him! And not only so, but he ought also to reflect that proportionally to their *lack of care* and watching will one day be the severity of the *punishment which they shall suffer, for unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required.* By thoughts like these the heart of subjects will no doubt be reverently and affectionately inclined towards the magistracy; and if not, then surely by a regard to their own interest, when they reflect how unspeakably great are the benefits they enjoy under an upright and judicious magistracy, as Luther writes in his Catechism, "It is above all things necessary that we should pray for civil magistrates and rulers, seeing that it is by them that God provides for the continuance of our daily bread and all our comfort in this life. For although we have received from Him all manner of good things in abundance, yet none of them can we keep, or safely and cheerfully use, unless He give us also a

[1] Matt. xxii. 21.

steadfast and quiet government; because when there is dispeace, enmity, and war, our daily bread is taken away or wholly withheld. For this reason it would be a proper thing to set a *loaf* as an ensign upon the escutcheon of every pious sovereign, or to stamp it as a figure upon his money, in order to remind both sovereigns and subjects that it is through their office that we enjoy both protection and peace, and that without these we could neither enjoy, obtain, nor continue to possess daily bread!"

Yes, verily, ye princes of the earth! whoever considers how great and important is the trust committed to your hands, must needs heartily pray for you. And what is the boon that I ought to supplicate on your behalf? I would fain ask nothing more than that the Holy Spirit would give you fully to comprehend what the words, *By the grace of God*, which your hand so often indites, really signify. Then would all be well. This would make you *little* and it would make you *great*. It would give you an eye turned upwards *to supplicate*, and an eye turned downwards *to bless*. It would give you a kingly heart, serious and gentle, like that of the King of kings, by whom you have been enthroned.

Thou King of kings, on whose dread sceptre grow,
As shoots, the sceptres of all kings below,
The proud ones who their sovereign's rights disdain,
Curb and restrain.

Honour to monarchs! We shall be what they
Now are, and on the earth made new one day,
Of higher dignities than here are theirs,
Shall *all* be heirs.

If he with justice gird his loins, and sway
His sceptre for the public weal alway,
Down at the monarch's feet submissive fall
His brethren all.

Not to the throned and sceptred mortal bends
Their knee, but to the Infinite, who sends,
To guard the rights of His eternal crown,
His servant down.

Lord, on his heart, the elected of his race,
As with an iron pen this lesson trace,
That *Thine* the crowns, and *Thine* the wholesome dread
By sceptres bred.

Unite again the Shepherd and the sheep;
Rule Thou the rulers, and from evil keep;
To melt all hearts, and all in one to blend,
Thy Spirit send.

57.

Let every Man abide in his Calling.

A chamber may be mean and poor,
But if adorned with furniture
Selected with judicious taste,
The owner will not be disgraced.
And even so the humblest trade
Is high and honourable made
When all from LOVE *to God is done,*
And at HIS GLORY *aimed alone.*

GEN. i. 27, 28. "God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him. And said, Replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."

1 COR. vii. 20. "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called."

ECCLUS. xlii. 24, 25. "All things are double, one against another, and He hath made nothing imperfect. One thing establisheth the good of another, and who shall be filled with beholding His glory."

ECCLES. vi. 7. "All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled."

MY God and Father, give me wisdom, that I may learn more and more how to conduct myself, even in my temporal calling, so as to please Thee. There are many to whom it is one of the hardest points in Christianity to abide in the right path. When I first began seriously to reflect what were the requirements of my profession, a voice whispered in my ear, "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare."[1] And even when I said to myself, it is not because I *wish* to be rich that I labour, the voice rejoined, "One thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part." If I then for a little let my business go its own way, another monitor addressed me saying, "Ought he who has once *been called* to a profession to withdraw his shoulder from the yoke?" Upon this subject I have pondered long, and find that a man's station and calling may be looked upon in a threefold aspect.

In the Romish Church the notion has sometimes been entertained that the laity are identical with the world, and that none but the ecclesiastical order are dear children of God. Nor are the instances few of kings and princes on the eve of their decease putting on the monkish habit, as if it were an Elijah's mantle in which they could fly direct to heaven. Luther tells us of a picture he had seen, in which there was a ship called The Holy Catholic Church, and embarked in it were the Pope and his clergy, but not a single layman, not even a prince or a king. These were represented swimming about in the water, and were merely drawn towards the ship by cords and ropes thrown out to them by the holy fathers. Wherever such an error actually prevailed, what unhallowed confusion and bitter misery it must necessarily have produced! Let it once be forgotten that man is a plant which no doubt stretches its top towards heaven, but which must at the same time remain fixed by its roots to the earth, and then even the clergy might come at last to fancy that they were no longer a sufficiently sacred order, and all mankind might long to put on the monkish cowl. That the laity, however, are by no

[1] 1 Tim. vi. 9.

means so low and contemptible a class, may be inferred from the fact that long after the holy apostles became fishers *of men*, they continued, at least occasionally,[1] to follow the fisher's trade; and that St Paul was not ashamed of being a weaver of carpets as well as a preacher of the Gospel. It would also appear that the first teachers of the Christian Church were far from considering the exercise of a handicraft beneath their dignity; for all to which the apostle exhorts them is that their trades should not be *disreputable*.[2] It is even credible that, as the people called Him "the *Carpenter*,"[3] our Lord Himself did not in His youth disdain to practise that handicraft. To this effect Luther relates the following story: "A certain bishop was curious to know how Jesus used to employ Himself when a youth; and to him a dream was vouchsafed, in which he saw a little boy gathering chips and shavings of wood, and at the hour of dinner calling his father to table, and asking his mother, 'Shall I also bid the other man come?' at which the bishop was frightened and awoke." I myself believe that in His boyhood the little Jesus, like any other dutiful child, helped His mother in her domestic labours, and was sometimes sent to the well for water—nay, perhaps sometimes to the shop for wine; and this may have been the reason why, at the marriage in Cana, where the supply of it was insufficient, His mother applied to Him as on former occasions she had often done. There is another story in the lives of the old fathers, and about the time when they began to look upon the habit of a monk or hermit as a certain passport to the heavenly Jerusalem, which teaches in an admirable way that the Christian whose lot in life is to wield the awl and bodkin is held by the Lord in far higher esteem than the shaveling or the capuchin. The story runs thus: One day while St Anthony was praying in his cell, he heard a voice saying, "Anthony, in spite of the austerity of thy life, thou art not worthy of being compared to the cobbler of Alexandria." On

[1] John, i. 42; Luke, v. 1; John, xxi. 1.
[2] 1 Tim. iii. 3; Titus, i. 7.
[3] Mark, vi. 3.

hearing this the saint rose early in the morning, took staff in hand, and set off in great haste for the city. There he presented himself to the cobbler to whom the voice referred, but who was overcome with terror when so great and eminent a saint appeared before him. "Come tell me, friend," said Anthony, "what are the good works which you are in use to perform, for it is on thy account that I have left my cell and travelled the long way from the desert?" To this the cobbler replied, "I know of no good work which I have performed, save that in the morning when I leave my bedchamber I say to myself, 'All the people of this city, both small and great, will be admitted into the kingdom of heaven, for they are more righteous than I; and well should I deserve eternal punishment on account of my sins *if I did not believe that through the mercy of my God I shall be saved.*' These same words I also repeat from the bottom of my heart at night before I lay me down to rest." On hearing this St Anthony exclaimed, "Verily, my son, you sit at home, and, like a skilful master, attain at your ease to the kingdom of heaven; whereas I, who have spent my life and endured many toils and dangers in the desert, have not yet arrived at such proficiency that I can compare the life I lead with that which you have now described."

Again, there are others who do not, indeed, despise the temporal occupation to which the Lord has called them, but who regard it merely as a wholesome penance, just as some ambitious man might do the task, if such were allotted to him, of splitting a heap of firewood, and in whose opinion there is no trade or business upon earth which it is worth a man's while even to touch with his finger save that of saving the soul. Now no doubt the son of Sirach has said, "A yoke and a collar doth bow the neck, so are tortures and torments for an evil servant;"[1] and quite true it is that we are one and all of us evil servants, and that many trades do make the evil servant feel the yoke and rod to be very heavy. This, how-

[1] Ecclus. xxxiii. 26.

ever, is by no means the case with every trade. On the contrary, many of the common arts and handicrafts are capable of being used for some better purpose than that for which a clog is tied to the neck of an evil servant. What profitable service have some of the fine arts rendered to religion! Is it not a beautiful testimony which Luther gives to music when he says: "Music is half a preceptress and teacher of morals, for it makes people more gentle and patient, well-bred, and intelligent. He who despises music, as all fanatics do, is one of whom I cannot think well; for it is a gift and benefit from God, and not a thing for which we are indebted to man. It drives out the devil and promotes hilarity; while listening to it we forget wrath, incontinence, and other vices. Next to theology I pay the highest honour to music"? Ought we not also to vouchsafe equal praise to painting, engraving, architecture, and many other arts, which may be made subservient in so delightful a way to the glory of God? Nay, shall not some measure of such arts in a different fashion than is here in use among men find a place in the blessed kingdom of heaven? for there, as the Apocalypse of St John informs us, the harps shall sound far more sweetly than on earth in hymns of praise to God.[1] To the same effect is the following incident related to us respecting Luther: In the year 1538, and on the 17th day of September, he entertained the singers in his choir, and after hearing them execute several charming motets, expressed his admiration in these words,—"Seeing that the Lord our God has shed down into this present life—which is but a dunghill—such noble gifts, and endowed us with them, what will He not do in the life eternal, where all, of which we have here the bare rudiments, shall have attained to the highest and most delectable perfection?"

And if the higher arts are hallowed by the service which they render to the sanctuary, why not likewise every trade which is required for the same purpose? It is not merely architects and painters that are needed for the building of

[1] Rev. xiv. 2.

a church, but carpenters and smiths, and other kinds of workmen. To this effect Moses says of the skilful artisans who were employed in the construction of the tabernacle: "See, the Lord hath called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; and He hath filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship; and to devise curious works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in the cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of wood, to make any manner of cunning work. And He hath put in his heart that he may teach, both he, and Aholiab the son of Ahisamach. Them hath He filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of work, of the engraver, and of the cunning workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue, and in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any work, and of those that devise cunning work." [1] According, therefore, to the doctrine of this passage, the *Spirit of God* is the Giver, even when the gift consists of insight and practical skill in the arts; and how can the gift of such a Giver be cheaply rated, or looked upon merely as a burden and a toil? Much more does it reveal to us the presence in man of that divine breath which elevates him above the brutes. Many who have visited the settlements of the Moravians, and seen their streets and gardens, but especially their graveyards, must have felt how the breath of God, when it is in men's hearts, can communicate itself to their houses, offices, and grounds, and shed over them a tranquil calm. And if the peace of God within us reflects itself in the flesh of the countenance, and there takes a visible shape, why not also in a man's handiwork—in the plan of his house and the laying out of his garden? Nay, are not even habits of order and cleanliness a mirror of his soul, and equally so the soundness, durability, and elegance of any article which he manufactures? A trade and a calling, therefore, are something more than the bit and bridle in the mouth of a horse, or the yoke upon the neck of

[1] Exod. xxxv. 30-35.

an ox, and must be designed for some better purpose than merely to tame the old Adam.

I am of opinion that they are right who affirm that divine wisdom has ordained the trades and professions of this earth for *three* wise purposes. In the first place, that craftsmen and artists may devise ever more and more beautiful and perfect forms with which to invest matter to the glory of God, who has endowed the spirit of man with such skill and knowledge; secondly, to exercise our brotherly love in making life more pleasing and delightful, inasmuch as in such matters we must be mutually beholden to each other; and finally, for the furtherance and accomplishment, as far as practicable, of wise and pious designs both in civil life and in the Church, whether tending to the welfare of the body or to that of the soul.

When I regard the subject in this light, it appears to me to be the duty of all men, whatever be their trade or calling, to lay out their intelligence and skill to the best advantage, in order that each may perfect himself in his particular line; and this, as would be easy to show, may be done not only without pride and worldly-mindedness, but, on the contrary, from love to *God* and the *brethren*, and a regard to *the public good.* The lovelier the shape which a craftsman can give to his handiwork, and the more beautiful and ingenious the creations of the artist's skill, so much the more abundant is the praise which accrues to the Spirit from on high, from whom all good gifts, and this among the rest, come down. As Luther once said in commendation of his musician, Master Sanftel: "Such a motet I could not make though I were to be torn limb from limb; just as, on the other hand, neither could *he expound a psalm as well as I;* and so the gifts of the Spirit are manifold, just as are the members of the body."

The better and more serviceable the articles are which one Christian furnishes to another,—the wholesomer the bread which the baker bakes—the more firmly the architect lays the foundation of the house which he builds—the more expeditiously and largely the merchant procures the commodities of

other countries for the use and benefit of his own,—the more in such external services will a regard for the welfare and a desire in all respects to consult the interests of his brother, be manifested. In fine, the more skilful a man becomes in digging wells, making roads, improving land, governing a town or managing its revenue, the better will such Christian wisdom qualify him to promote the public welfare; and if all this spring from a desire to serve God and his neighbour, his daily work will be a work of Christian charity, and he will no longer require to wait for special and select occasions to exercise that virtue. Luther has said that a married wife ought to be convinced that, in her position, the suckling of her babe and the tending of her children are as certainly acceptable to God as if He had spoken to her, and expressly commanded her to do it. In like manner, the servant-girl who sweeps the house, boils the pot, and feeds the cattle, ought to be firmly persuaded in her mind that she is walking according to the divine commandment, if in these things she faithfully executes the orders she has received. And thus ought all ranks of men to cherish the confidence that it is God who has allotted to them their several trades and occupations, and to be contented each with his own, however bad it may be. In that case faith would place all of them upon a level, for God pays no regard to whether thine be mean or noble, but only to whether thou art satisfied with it, and acceptest it as allotted to thee by Him.

It often happens that Christian souls find it very hard to reconcile their hearts to their vocation; and the reason, no doubt, is, because their vocation runs *side by side* with their faith, charity, and hope, instead of issuing *out of them.* It then for certain becomes a species of idolatry.

A man's vocation, however, and especially his handicraft, even if that be of the humblest sort, may and ought to be a *priestly* ministry. In creating him, God made man after His own image, and thereby appointed him to have dominion over the earth.[1] And is it not an exercise of this dominion when

[1] Gen. i. 26.

the eye of intelligence penetrates with ever-growing insight into all that the earth produces on its surface or hides in its depths? When the resistance of matter is overcome; when the elements are subjugated; when the products and commodities of distant countries are brought together and exchanged, or made subservient to spiritual purposes and designs; when spirit operates and puts its impress upon them; and when, to crown all, that spirit subjects itself in everything to the guidance of the Lord, so that all is done in humility, according to the pattern of the divine purposes, under the incitement of divine love, and to the glory of Him to whom alone all glory belongs, the God "from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift,"—in order to this result, the labourer and hireling are as indispensable in their place as the philosopher and the artist.

Oh how soon would Christianity come into good repute were it found that in every town the *Christian* tailors were the cleverest and most industrious, the *Christian* watchmakers the most ingenious and skilful, the *Christian* servants the most faithful and attentive, the *Christian* painters and musicians the most proficient, the *Christian* functionaries the most active and intelligent,—and so in every other line! It is true that such sedulous endeavours after proficiency in our secular employments are not unconnected with danger; but the proverb truly says—

> "Learn to look danger in the face,
> Or at the fireside keep your place."

Let us, then, breathe a pious prayer and set vigorously to work, remembering that *he who journeys at God's command has God also for his guide.* Besides, would there be no danger wert thou to imprison thyself with monks in a cloister, and do nothing but sing psalms? No, this point I will firmly maintain, that if we have had a *real call* to our profession, we may go forward in it with full confidence that we are in the ways of God.

I have often, and with my whole heart, wished to know how much of the business and toil of the present life will be trans-

lated with us into the new heaven and new earth. A great man [1] has said that "all we have learned in this world will be of no more use to us when we depart out of it than the names of the streets of London." I do not know, however, if that be true. It may well be that we think too meanly of the earthly creatures, as of all sublunary things; and that when the dead shall rise, much of the business and employments which they followed here below will rise along with them, and take a nobler shape. Nay, might it not be said that, were the sweat wiped from the brow and sin extirpated from the heart, the work of earth might be a work of heaven? The more we contemplate them from this point of view, the higher the notion we will be ready to entertain of our pastimes here below. But for the present I agree with Luther, who said, that when he hung as a suckling on his mother's breast, little did he know what he was afterwards to eat or drink, or what manner of life he would lead; and far less do we understand how all that will be in the world to come. In this matter I will patiently wait, like the children on Christmas Eve, who with hearts full of confidence and hope stand behind the door until the time comes for it to be opened, and the tree with its hundred lights, and all the appendages about and upon it, bursts upon their eye and fully satisfies their heart; meanwhile I will give heed to the apostle's advice, and "use this life as not abusing it." Alas!

> Guests of a day on earth, we here
> Like fools attempt strongholds to rear,
> But take no pains to build a home,
> In the eternal world to come.

Oh teach me to live without abusing life!

> Yes, help me, Lord, from day to day
> The appointed work to do,
> And serve Thee, while on earth I stay,
> With childlike heart and true.

[1] Leibnitz.

I hear so many asking still,
Why must I so and so?
But when Thou sayst, "*Such is my will*,"
'Tis all I want to know.

True! many a task prescribed by Thee
A feeble child might do;
But, therefore, 'tis more fit for me,
For I am feeble too.

And yet, however frail the shoot,
If from true love it grow,
The virtue of that holy root
Its flower and fruit will show.

Does ought unlovely anywhere
In nature meet the eye,
When of the love of God we there
The signature descry?

And even the work which here below
My feeble hand achieves,
If from the *same pure fount* it flow,
Thy gracious smile receives.

And when at last the seed love sowed
On earth bears fruit above,
Far nobler work will be assigned
In those bright realms to love.

58.

Be faithful in that which is least.

Bestir thy hands,
And any trade
Will earn thee bread—
Not all that greed,
But what thy need,
Each day demands.

Let then to toil
On earth the while
Thy HAND *be given;*
But far apart
Make for THY HEART
A home in heaven.

PSALM CXXVIII. 1, 2. "Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in His ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee."

LUKE, XVI. 10. "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much."

LORD, they who are Thy children are of a rank far too lofty to need to feel anxious about their daily bread. All the burden of such care I cast upon Thee, as Thou thyself hast commanded me to do, and now therefore the matter is in Thy hands.[1] Thou wilt not permit that I should be put to shame before mine adversaries, or that they should have cause to say, See how the Lord rewardeth His servants! Never wilt Thou permit them to open their mouth against me, and cry, "Aha, aha! our eye hath seen it."[2] Such was the confident hope of David, and it is also mine; and if, O mighty God, Thou hast in mercy connected Thine honour with the cause of Thy poor servants, surely it would be on our side a grievous sin, were we to fail to do our part, and thereby put Thine honour to hazard. And yet that sin we commit, when all we do is to look up to the clouds, and expect them to pour down rain and sunshine upon us, while we pay no attention to the spade and the plough, which here on earth Thou hast put into our hands. Wise were the men of former days when they said, All depends on God's blessing; but no less wisely did they say that God helps those who use their hands. They said, moreover, He gives us the ox, but not a hold of it by the horns—meaning that we must exert ourselves in order to subject it to our power. Hence, in the household of God the general maxim is, *Pray as if thou didst not labour, and labour as if thou didst not pray.* To carry on both simultaneously is a difficult task for a being so changeable as man; because, when prayer is lively, labour grows languid, and when prayer is

[1] Psalm lv. 22; 1 Pet. v. 7. [2] Psalm xxxv. 21.

languid, labour becomes lively. The human heart revolves like a wheel, of which one spoke goes down as another goes up.

It is enough to break one's heart to see a man made after the divine image, and still more if he be a father, calling aloud for bread to himself and his children, *and willing* to do his part by labouring for it; but who, notwithstanding, fails to find it, because he can find nothing to do. At such a spectacle the weak in faith stumble and lose confidence in God, who of old time said, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."[1] But may we not be permitted to question whether instances of this really occur, and whether it ever happened that any man who had all his life long been industrious and willing to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, actually died of hunger? That it never did, is a bold statement to make; but what emboldens me to make it is, that one far greater than I has made it before me: for thus spake King David,—"I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."[2]

Any exception to this rule, I have always found, might be accounted for as follows: Either it happened according to the Preacher's description, "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down:" "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man."[3] Men reap as they sow. A bad beginning makes a bad end. He who plants thistles must not expect to gather grapes. How needful for those who are the chief sufferers from indigence would be a discourse upon the words of the son of Sirach: "When thou hast enough, remember the time of hunger; and when thou art rich, think upon poverty and need"![4] Persons of this class never reflect that

[1] Psalm l. 15.
[2] Psalm xxxvii. 25.
[3] Prov. xxiv. 30-34.
[4] Ecclus. xviii. 25.

there will be a to-morrow after to-day, or that he who eats his whole loaf at breakfast is likely to have a scanty supper. However much they have, they use it all, and when they are full, are idle. Or if not from this cause, indigence proceeds from men having attempted things above their reach, and disregarded the proverb—

> "Try first to understand
> The task you take in hand;"

or the prudent advice of the son of Sirach: "Meddle not with many matters: for if thou meddle much thou shall not be innocent; and if thou follow after, thou shalt not attain, neither shalt thou escape by fleeing."[1] Sometimes it is avarice, and sometimes ambition, which instigates them to attempt to fly higher than their wings can carry; and if the issue be unfortunate, who can wonder?

> "Whate'er commences without thought
> Is sure at last to end in nought."

Probably, too, such want and penury are a penal retribution for many an old error and hidden misdeed, unknown to other men, but respecting which he who has the yoke to bear is the best able to tell whence it comes, and in how far he bears it as a penance; and he will also be the last to cast the blame of it upon God. Oh how much oftener than is ever suspected, may the victim of such bitter penury be reaping the harvest of a seed of evil-doing! for it admits not of a doubt that ill-gotten gain never prospers, and is dissipated in the way it was acquired. Ah me! if in the haunts of beggars the walls could speak, would the doctrine which they preach be different from that declared by the prophet, when he says that "poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth instruction;"[2] and that "sin is a destruction to any people"?

It cannot be that that can come to nought which the Word of God so often avers—as, for example, when it says: "He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand; but the hand

[1] Ecclus. xi. 10. [2] Prov. xiii. 18.

of the diligent maketh rich;"[1] and "In all labour there is profit."[2] To the same effect the son of Sirach exhorts: "Trust in the Lord and abide in thy labour; for it is an easy thing for the Lord, on the sudden, to make a poor man rich."[3] As for the cases in which sickness, or war, or general dearth may have reduced an industrious and faithful servant of God to bitter poverty, such poverty will be of temporary duration; for in the day of trouble the Lord will send some friend to take his part, and not suffer him to be tempted above that which he is able to bear,[4] but will temper the cold to suit the thinness of his coat. A servant of the Lord who has always maintained his integrity may possibly become *poor*, but he will never become a beggar; and of *cheerful* poverty the proverb beautifully says that "*it is riches without wealth*," which is consonant with the saying of Solomon: "There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing; there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches."[5] Besides, it is principally those He means to favour whom the Lord visits with poverty, there being so many good things of which it is the parent and the nurse. Does not the proverb tell us that in the school of privation and hunger many have acquired their learning? and that uprightness and industry cannot reduce a man to beggary, was well expressed by Luther, when being asked, What was the best investment? he answered, Honesty.

I therefore know for certain that if I do my part the Lord will never suffer me to lack food and raiment; and when along with these He gives me a cheerful heart, what more should I desire? At a little fountain we can quench our thirst as well as at a great one. I must needs, however, do what is my part, and this implies that in the everyday work allotted me by the Lord I must look upon nothing as too little, but learn to be *faithful even in the smallest things*. It is related of Luther that he wrote with chalk above his fireplace the saying of the Lord, "*He that is faithful in that which is least, is faith-*

[1] Prov. x. 4. [2] Prov. xiv. 23. [3] Ecclus. xi. 21.
[4] 1 Cor. x. 13. [5] Prov. xiii. 7.

ful also in much,"[1] and assigned as the reason that no one who despises a penny will ever possess a pound. Dogs learn to eat leather by beginning with parings, and he who wastes an hour will have little scruple in wasting a whole day. As the son of Sirach says, "He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little."[2] Our Lord has told us that He holds faithfulness in the use of worldly wealth in the very highest esteem; for He adds in the same passage, "If ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? and if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who will give you that which is your own?"[3] It is spiritual blessings which He here calls the *true riches*, and *that which is our own;* and hence it appears that these will be bestowed in proportion to the fidelity which has been shown in the use of worldly wealth. We are to begin with little things; and were Christians to take the admonition seriously to heart, and were every one in his vocation to exercise due conscientiousness even in the smallest matters, how good a reputation would be thereby procured for the Gospel! In truth, however, there is nothing so sad as to see men continually labouring to mount aloft and aspiring to be preachers, not to say spotless angels, before they have learned to be decent tailors, shopkeepers, and farmers. No doubt it is often a worthy zeal which prompts tradesmen to attempt to preach. Has not the Lord declared that if they who have been called to that office are silent, the "very stones should cry out"? When, then, a tradesman happens to be impelled by the Spirit to bear from house to house a testimony in behalf of Christ, the whole clergy of the city ought not, as they too often do, to burn with indignation, as if—may God forbid the thought!—they were afraid of *losing their bread*. No doubt the clergy say, Are *we* then dumb dogs? and if not, what would the stones be at when they open their mouths along with us, who are the watchmen upon the towers? And yet when a long war has come to an end, and gentle peace

[1] Luke, xvi. 10. [2] Ecclus. xix. 1. [3] Luke, xvi. 11, 12.

returns, is it enough if only the watchmen upon the tower proclaim it by sound of trumpet? May not on such an occasion one neighbour be allowed to shout aloud to another, "Peace, peace"? To more than this the laity do not pretend. They do not claim the pulpit, nor the priestly gown, nor the right to administer the sacraments. Let them, then, proceed as far as *the Lord* bids them. Whether they have been bidden or not will soon appear, when it is seen whether they preach with anything but *the lips;* for certain it is that if a layman suffer his preaching to impair his faithfulness in "*that which is little*," even the great things with which he presumes to meddle will not prosper in his hand. And nothing can be more odious than the set of babblers who do what St Paul blames in young widows, saying, "Withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not." [1] In general there is so much to do, and which needs first of all to be done in the right building up by every one of his own house to the glory of God, that men are willing to leave the task of building up the Church to those to whom the Lord has assigned it.

There are few professions which have not their own peculiar flaw, bequeathed in succession from father to son, and from son to grandson. Advocates, by the exorbitance of their fees, and the defence of what is obviously unjust, often do more harm than good. Merchants have one set of weights with which to buy and another with which to sell, and deal in *unwholesome wares;* farmers work their labourers like horses and feed them like sparrows, against whom both apostles and prophets utter woe;[2] innkeepers by double charges put salt into the travellers' soup; artists attempt to paint before they have learned to mix colours; doctors reckon talk to be a branch of their trade; scholars are seldom free from absurdities, that make people fear they have lost half of their wits; and philosophers, above all, because they make *the calendars*,

[1] 1 Tim. v. 13. [2] Jer. xxii. 13; James, v. 4.

fancy that they can also make *the weather*. Soldiers, too, there are, who, though averse to fighting, are commonly mighty at boasting; and clergymen who think that their office consists in wearing a gown. In short, there is not a single profession which, along with its own peculiar *cares*, has not its own peculiar *flaw;* and hence the man who firmly sets his face against it, and, instead of excusing himself for doing what is wrong with the plea that others do the same, earnestly strives, according to the exhortation of the apostle, "to be in all things blameless and harmless, the son of God, without rebuke,"[1] will find the task a hard one; and yet it is a task which, as a Christian, he must undertake. In hours of calm reflection we ought to ponder before God all the sins and temptations which cleave to our line of life, in order faithfully to watch and protect ourselves from them.

In cases where God vouchsafes blessing and success to a family, so that it increases in numbers, and at the same time in wealth and substance, a new temptation is apt to take its rise. On the one hand there are some who believe that they can now dispense with prayer, and who make flesh their arm, and put their trust in the things that perish; although the Lord understands quite as well how to make a rich man suddenly poor as how to make a poor man suddenly rich, according to the words of James, "Let the rich man glory in that he is made low, because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away." And great is the mistake were any one to imagine that when riches enter the house there is *less* of temptation to cleave to pence, seeing that experience teaches, on the contrary, that in such a case the attachment of the heart to earthly good *becomes so much the stronger*, according to the proverb, The more a man has the less he gives away, and he grows miserly as he grows rich. It seems a strange thing to affirm, but yet it is true, that the fear of want is always greatest where wealth is most abundant. It was said by Frederick II. that superfluity blinds even the strongest minds; and the truth

[1] Phil. ii. 15.

of the observation is exemplified by the fact, that the more a man possesses, the less is he disposed to think that he possesses enough.

True it is that as a family increases their wants multiply. The children must have clothes and shoes, and the servants wages and food; but who have had larger experience than virtuous parents blessed with a numerous offspring that God can drop His gifts into men's bosoms in a way they know not of, and that when the children multiply so likewise do the loaves from day to day, though they know as little from whence these come? On this subject Luther observes, "That the increase of children generally deteriorates men by making them more penurious, and leading them to scrape and pare and save wherever they can, in order that their offspring may be well provided for. They do not know that every little child before he is brought into the world has had his portion —what and how much he is to have, and what he is to become — already marked out for him." Moreover, there is this danger inherent in the pursuit of riches, that one has not the power to stop where he would wish, which is especially true of merchants. They are driven from one speculation into another, and become ever more and more entangled with worldly cares, and so forget that here on earth we are pilgrims.

Inasmuch, then, O my God and Father, as I am thus apprehensive of deviating now to the right hand and now to the left, I implore of Thee to give me above all things the true pilgrim frame of mind. Certain it is that here we have no permanent place of abode, but are strangers and sojourners on the earth; vouchsafe to me, therefore, a contented heart, which shall count it enough to have food and raiment when to these Thou dost add Thy grace. If Thou give me riches, I will use them for no other purpose than to be rich in good works, and to lay up treasures as a fund for the life to come. If Thou send me poverty, then also will I praise Thee, for then I shall be less exposed to temptation. And if the mite

which the poor widow cast into the treasury outweighed the costly offerings of the rich,[1] so also will my penny, if given with a willing heart, be counted as great as if I had wealth to give. This poor life of ours is but a brief winter day; it will soon be gone, and then its poverty or riches will lie behind us like a dream, while the good things of eternity shall recreate our hearts for ever. To these point all the desires of my soul, and to these conduct me by Thy grace.

59.

There are many Members, but one Body.

You marvel that the Lord, who made
All things according to a plan,
Sets on so manifold a grade
The motley family of man.

For some are nobly born and bred,
And some are men of low degree;
Here a proud patron lifts his head,
There a poor client bends the knee.

A prince imperial is one,
Another toils his bread to gain;
The king sits on a golden throne,
The page attends to bear his train.

But earth has other trees beside
The lordly palm that towers on high;
Nor through the air's dominion wide
Do only royal eagles fly.

And lesser orbs than sun and moon
Shed o'er the firmament their light,
And even IN HEAVEN GOD'S *will is done*
By others than archangels bright.

[1] Luke, xxi. 2.

Why marvel, then, if He who guides
All earthly things by counsel wise,
The numerous HOST OF MEN *divides,*
And sets in ranks and companies?

Where many meet upon a plain,
And all must room convenient find,
Some stand before, and some again
Must needs consent to stand behind.

BUT IF WHERE'ER THEIR LOT MAY FALL,
NOT ONE BUT SEES THE MONARCH'S FACE,
AND AT THE COMMON TABLE ALL
FIND THEIR APPOINTED PLATE AND PLACE,
I WONDER ANY MAN OF SENSE
CAN HERE PRETEND TO TAKE OFFENCE.

1 COR. xii. 17-20. "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? if the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body."

ECCLUS. x. 22. "Whether he be rich, noble, or poor, their glory is the fear of the Lord."

"WHEREFORE henceforth," saith the apostle, "know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."[1]

This is what always happens when Christ awakens the soul, and makes it acquainted with Himself. In surveying the whole family of man upon earth, the only things we then observe are, whether they are or are not the children of God; and dividing them into two classes, we turn our hearts towards the one and away from the other. So great and momentous does the new creatureship in Christ appear, that we look upon

[1] 2 Cor. v. 16, 17.

it as constituting the only proper difference between man and man; nay more, even among those who partake of the new nature we at first make no distinction between the great and the little, the high and the low, the wise and the foolish, the more and the less advanced. All that we look to or inquire after is, whether they are willing to be Christ's, and to be called by His name. For this reason I can easily understand how it has happened that among the adherents of the Lord parties have arisen who imagined that they rightly caught His meaning when they refused to admit any distinction at all among professing Christians, and interpreted with the utmost strictness the saying of the apostle, that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."[1] This, for example, is done by that body of Christians who take to themselves the name of *Friends*, but are by others called *Quakers*. In like manner, in Luther's days, there arose fanatical Anabaptists and other sectaries, who, in the wildness of their zeal, sought to abolish all diversities of rank, and to place servants and masters, the rich and the poor, upon the same level.

It is possible to feel very painfully the partition walls which divide from each other the high and the low among the children of God, and more especially the fact of the unequal distribution of earthly property, so that many a Christian brother must needs pine in misery and care, while another possesses more than his necessities require. Indeed I have myself often had very serious thoughts upon this subject, when reading what is reported about the infant Church—viz., that "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common."[2] What! said I to myself; could brotherly love do so great things in those days, and ought it not also to be able to do the same in our own? I sought for instruction, however, and it was vouchsafed to me.

[1] Gal. xii. 28.

[2] Acts, ii. 45; iv. 32.

When the apostle delivered the precept, "Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God,"[1] he excepted no station or trade save those against which he had elsewhere warned *as being disreputable.*[2] We do not read that Peter enjoined the centurion Cornelius at his conversion to quit the military profession, or that Paul on a similar occasion gave a similar order to the deputy, Sergius Paulus, in the island of Cyprus; nor do we even read that he ordered Christian masters to set at liberty their servants, although these were then bondsmen and slaves. What he did was to exhort the former not to forget that they also had a Master in heaven; and to remind the latter that they were the Lord's freemen, and therefore ought to perform their service as to the Lord, and not as to men.[3] Nay, he commanded Onesimus, the runaway slave, after he had converted him at Rome, to return to his master Philemon, who was a Christian; and wrote on the occasion the beautiful epistle in which he pours forth the whole affection of his heart. It thus appears that even the apostles of the Lord gave their sanction to the diversities of rank. As for the community of goods which obtained among the Christians in the infant Church, it was only of such sort as left every one at liberty if he chose to sell any part of his superfluous property for the benefit of the poor brethren.[4] And accordingly we afterwards find a Christian female, the mother of the evangelist Mark, possessing a house of her own.[5] Nor could such a partition of property possibly obtain among Christians as a general rule, but was practicable only among those in Jerusalem; and hence, when the Church there was reduced to poverty, and charitable contributions were made in all quarters for their relief, nothing more was required of the contributors than that every one should give *according to that he had.*[6] Neither did the apostle object to parents laying up in store for their children,[7] but even enjoined as quite a

[1] 1 Cor. vii. 24. [2] 1 Tim. iii. 3; Titus, i. 7.
[3] 1 Cor. vii. 22; Eph. vi. 5-9. [4] Acts, v. 4.
[5] Acts, xii. 12. [6] 2 Cor. viii. 12, 13. [7] 2 Cor. xii. 14.

special duty that every man should first of all provide for those of his own house.[1]

Alas! that which makes the inequalities of rank and fortune so painful here on earth is singly and solely the forgetfulness of men that they are not *lords* over these things, but only *stewards, and will have to render an account.* Let that one truth be recognised, and it sets all things in their proper order; and though there may still remain manifold *distinctions* upon earth, there will be no *clefts or chasms.* It is thus that Luther admirably comments upon the saying of Christ: "*When thou art bidden to a wedding, go and sit down in the lowest room, that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher.*" Why does he here forbid us to sit down in the highest room, and yet says that he that sits down in the lowest shall be made to go up higher? I answer, the explanation must be sought in the word *choose* in the seventh verse, where it is said that *when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms*, just as in the foregoing context the ground of the censure is in the expression that on the Sabbath-day they *watched* him. There must be sitters both in the higher and in the lower rooms, for it is impossible to provide every individual in the Church with a special place or station, time, temple, or chapel of his own. And so in like manner we cannot all be princes, dukes, and noblemen, preachers and citizens, men and women, masters and servants. These many and different ranks require to be interspersed with each other; and in his own station, whatever it may be, every one has enough to do. We cannot, therefore, and ought not, all of us to sit equally high or equally low; and the distinction which God has ordained must be observed, that he who is of higher rank than others shall also occupy a higher seat. And so the duke must not set himself above the prince, nor the servant above the master. Moreover, there must also be a similar difference between other ranks, such as town and country people; and it is of great importance that what Christ here says and means should be

[1] Gal. vi. 10; 1 Tim. v. 8.

clearly understood. Know then, if thou be a man of rank, or hast in any way been preferred to others, that that advantage is a gift of God, and has been vouchsafed to thee not that thou shouldst plume thyself on account of it, and hold thy head above thy fellows, as if it made thee better in God's sight than they. Rather, on the contrary, is it His command that thou shouldst be the more *humble*, and minister with it to thy neighbour. The larger measure which God may have given to thee of power, rank, and dignity, thou oughtest to view as an injunction *to employ these gifts in the service of others;* and if thou neglect to do this, know for certain that many a poor herd-boy, whose talents and estimation in the eyes of the world are as nothing when compared to thine, is yet in the eyes of God and the angels greatly thy superior, and will be exalted to heaven, whereas thou, with all thy fair ornaments and proud honours, shalt be cast into hell. God is not the maker merely of princes, and counts, and nobles, and scholars, nor are these the only persons whom He has invited into His kingdom; but any man whatever, provided he be a Christian, is with Him quite as good as any other, according to the words of our Creed: "*I believe in God Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.*" Think not, then, that thou only art entitled to take the higher seat, and yield it to no other; for God, who made thee a master, or a ruler, or a doctor, or a teacher, is just as much the God of the poor beggar before thy door, and looks as straight at him as at the greatest prince or lord upon the earth. In short, whether thou sittest above, or in the middle, or below, the Creed puts all upon the same level when it says, "We believe in one God, maker of heaven and earth."

When one man learns to regard his rank and another his low degree, this one his wealth and that one his poverty, as being mere *gifts*, the cleft between them is at once done away. This the apostle tells us, in language of surpassing beauty, when he says to masters that they ought to look upon themselves as "servants of God," and bids servants remember that

they are "freemen of Christ." In those days servants were bondsmen or slaves, and yet the apostle did not, for wise reasons, declaim against slavery. In fact, where the master and the servant stand toward God and each other in the relation described, slavery is virtually done away, and all that remains of it is but the outward shell. The apostle James says, to the same effect, "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted; but the rich, in that he is made low."[1] By which he means that the man of low degree and the man of wealth should make it their boast, the one that the Lord has spiritually exalted him, and the other that he has been spiritually humbled and abased.

The Christian man of rank, who sets a value upon his position, does so merely because he judges that he ought not to allow what is a divine gift to be trodden under foot, and is well aware that it does not make him better than others; and if the Christian of low degree pay honour and deference to him who is in a higher place, he does it solely because he knows that the *Lord* has set him where he is, and it is to the divine ordinance, and not to the man, that his homage is paid. When the rich man looks upon himself as being a steward, and as having nothing of his own, he will feel the obligation to administer his means, not according to his own caprice, or for his own benefit. Recognising the fact that he is merely the purse-bearer of the Lord, he will discharge every bill which his Master presents to him. In this way the rich become paymasters and stewards of the poor, and will take deeply to heart what the Lord says in language so affecting: "Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me." *It is, in fact, Christ the Lord Himself* who appeals

[1] James, i. 9, 10.

to us in the person of every sufferer, and that is a thought which might well soften stones, not to speak of Christian hearts; and therefore the wealthy believer will never fail to honour every order of which he knows for certain that it has been forwarded to him by his Lord and King.

The exhortations in holy Scripture "to do good and communicate" are of so frequent occurrence as might lead us to suppose that we ought to reserve nothing for ourselves at all; and to that effect many a serious and disquieting thought may possibly pass through the mind of a conscientious Christian. Even in this matter, however, we must keep within certain bounds; for if our station and calling be from God, and if every station and calling entails a certain outward style of living, begets various wants, and even requires occasional recreations, we cannot so totally impoverish ourselves and give all we have to the poor. It must likewise be considered, that by going too far in that direction, a man would in other ways lack the means of fulfilling the positive duties which the Lord has imposed upon him. No doubt we often hear the poor speaking very absurdly on this subject, as if every man of rank who is a Christian brother were bound to wear the jacket and clogs of a common workman, and as if every joint of meat put into his pot were a robbery of the indigent. But were the man of rank, out of charity to the poor, really to put on the jacket and the clogs, he would be forced at last to go out of the world. For if one man's conscience were to scruple at eating flesh so long as another had only herbs, the conscience of that other might scruple as well about the herbs, so long as a third had only dry bread; and thus there would be no end to scruples of conscience. At the marriage of Cana, where He turned water into wine, and when sitting at table in the house of Mary and Martha, our Lord for certain did not drink mere water and eat dry bread. And as little in the matter of dress did He, like John the Baptist, put on a cloak of camel's hair, but wore an over and under garment, such as at the time were the ordinary

dress of the people of Palestine.[1] The measure of wealth which the Lord gives him the believer thankfully accepts, *and when the Lord requires it, cheerfully gives it back.* And in cases where he is certain that the Lord really calls, and that in the person of an indigent brother *his Saviour* is standing incognito before him, with an order in His hand, the best thing he can do is not to inquire and calculate too much whether enough will still be left for his cattle and servants, and wife and children, but to act on the old and faithful adage, "Alms-giving makes no man poor, as going to church is no loss of time."

It once happened that Justus Jonas, on giving an alms to a beggar, made the observation, "Who knows when God will give it me back?" Upon which Luther answered, "*As if He had not done it already!*" On another occasion, when the generous-hearted Reformer was appealed to by a poor beggar, and had only a single dollar in his box, "Out, Mr Dollar!" said he; "the Lord God has come for thee,"—and gave it away. It is true, moreover, that "man lives by every word which proceeds out of the mouth of God," and that what we give away returns to us when we least expect it. This is beautifully expressed by the Preacher when he says, "Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days."[2] Similar is the saying of the Arabians, "Cast thy bread into the water; though the fish do not know it, *God* does." And the proverb of King Solomon, which had reached their ears, has been expounded by the Easterns in a beautiful story. They tell us that there was a good-looking boy, who was loved and preferred above all others by the Caliph Mutawakkil. Having one day gone to the river Tigris to exercise himself in swimming, he was carried away by the stream, and although many hastened along the bank in order to save him, he suddenly disappeared. The occurrence, when reported to the Caliph, grieved him to the very heart. He descended from his throne, put on mourning, and wore it for seven days. When these were ended, he conceived a strong desire that at least

[1] John, xix. 23.

[2] Eccles. xi. 1.

the body of his favourite might be found; and sending for boatmen and divers, offered a thousand pieces of gold as a reward for its recovery. In a short time one of these returned and addressed him, saying, "O Caliph! thou hast offered a great reward to him who shall bring back to thee the dead body of thy favourite; behold, I bring him back to thee alive!" and having thus spoken, conducted the boy uninjured into the presence of his master. The Caliph was greatly astonished, and his joy was without measure. The account which the youth gave of himself was, that while being carried ever farther and farther down the stream, he, in his dismay, caught hold of the branch of a tamarind-tree, and close to it perceived a cave above the level of the water. Into this he crept for refuge, and on the following day, as he sat in deep despondency, pondering on the miserable death from hunger which threatened inevitably to be his fate, a wooden platter, whereon were twenty cakes, floated towards him, and continued daily to do so as long as he remained in the cave; and on all of the cakes there was imprinted a certain name. The Caliph was filled with wonder at the story, and without delay caused search to be made for the person whose name was on the cakes. Being found and interrogated by the Caliph as to his motives for doing what he had done, this person answered,—"It is written, '*Cast thy bread upon the water, and thou shalt find it after many days.*'" Yes, of a truth, as "ill-gotten gain enriches no man," so neither does an alms, when given in faith, make a man poor.

We read respecting the angels, that they too are not all of equal rank, but that there are among them archangels, and thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers, whom the Lord of hosts has certainly endowed with different gifts and capacities, but who yet consort together in love and friendship. And why so? It is because each of them knows full well that divine grace, and that alone, has made him what he is, and raised him to the rank which he holds. Would that this were also the case with mankind! No longer would diversities of gifts sever them from each other. Instead of lamenting or

murmuring at his humble station, every one would rather rejoice in the good allotted to himself, and at the same time be as heartily glad at that which had fallen to the share of a neighbour. Wherefore, dear brethren, if you ever look up to the things above you, and are inclined to feel ashamed of the calling which has been assigned as your lot, be exhorted to cast such pride away. The son of Sirach says: "Search not the things that are above thy strength, but what is commanded thee think thereupon; for it is not needful for thee to see the things that are in secret."[1] The humblest cottage may be handsomely furnished, and a village, however small, may have its annual wake.

Even in the stormiest April day
The fragrant violet blows;
And no rude chance can take away
The good which God bestows.

No doubt we often imagine that the desire to change our place and station is in order that we may be able to serve God more faithfully. But that also is one of Satan's tricks and devices; for what said the Lord to the servant who, having received a single pound, kept it laid up in a napkin, instead of laying it out at interest? Did He not call him a "wicked servant" for alleging: "I feared thee, because thou art an austere man, . . . and reapest that thou didst not sow"?[2] It seems, then, that our gracious Saviour is not willing to be numbered among the masters who reap what they did not sow; and therefore the man whose station in life makes the service of God more difficult to him than it is to others, may tranquillise his mind. The only law enforced in the court of heaven is the law of justice, that "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."[3] Give thyself then no trouble, if, by reason of thy station, little has been committed to thee. A day is coming when thou wilt rejoice that all the less is required at thy hand. In a vast edifice there must

[1] Ecclus. iii. 21, 22. [2] Luke, xix. 21. [3] Luke, xii. 48.

not only be square blocks and corner-stones of large dimensions, but small ones also to fill the chinks; and if the small ones do not make so great a show as the large, they have compensation in this, that they have less to bear.

60.

Husband and Wife are one Flesh.

TILL DEATH SHALL YOU DIVIDE !
These are the solemn words that make
One flesh of those who erst were twain;
Nor is there power on earth to break
That one indissoluble chain.
BE PRUDENCE THEN THY GUIDE;
LET PRUDENCE BE THY GUIDE.
And lest through wedlock's mystic gates
With light and heedless step thou go,
Bethink thee that behind it waits
Unmeasured happiness or woe
TILL DEATH SHALL YOU DIVIDE.

MATT. xix. 3-9. "The Pharisees also came unto Him, tempting Him, and saying unto Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And He answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto Him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put

away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."

SUCH are the few words on which depend the blessing of all the Christian families which have existed since there was a Church on earth. When some text of holy Scripture suggests to my mind a thought like this, I seem to myself to be standing before the little brook in a rocky cleft, of which we know that at the end of its course it has become a mighty river, and floats on its bosom some hundred sail.

Our Lord here refers back to the word which God spake at the beginning. At the time when the sacred records of Israel began, far higher notions respecting marriage were entertained than the law of Moses and the wisdom of the Scribes afterwards taught. The words by which it was instituted, but which the people had wholly overlooked, Jesus here brings again to light —sets it, so to speak, like a precious jewel in gold, and thus makes it one of the costliest ornaments of the Christian domestic economy. To all the beasts of the field God spake and said, "Increase and multiply." But of none of these is it written that he brought the female to the male, and hence among them there is no marriage. For Adam, however, he provides a peculiar wife taken out of himself, and conducts and gives her to him. Adam, on his part, assents and accepts her; and that is then a marriage. Almighty God also said: "*For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh;*" and He thereby distinguishes conjugal love from all the other kinds of love. The kinds are three—the false, the natural, and the conjugal. *False* love seeks its own things, as when gold, or lands, or honours are loved, or woman in an *unlawful* way. *Natural* love is that which is felt for parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends—and it seeks the good of another,

yet not altogether for that other's sake, but likewise for its own. Superior to all these is *conjugal* love. This is an ardent flame, and has no other object but the wedded consort. Its language is, I want not what is thine, neither thy gold, nor thy silver, nor anything else; what I want is *thyself*. The other kinds of love seek something else than their object. This one alone will have its object and nothing else, and will have it exclusively as its own. How pure would have been such a flame between bridegroom and bride had Adam never fallen! Now, however, even conjugal love is no longer pure; for although the consorts seek each the other, each in the other seeks also to gratify self, and so this love is defiled.

"*And they twain shall be one flesh.*" Inasmuch as each of them seeks to be not merely devoted to, but, if I may so say, identified with and lost in the other, they are no longer twain but one flesh; and it is impossible that any decrease or growth, any gain or loss, any death or birth, can concern the one and not equally affect both. Let loathsome disease, let leprosy, let infamy and stripes, or any evil whatever, befall either, still they do not part, because they are one body; and so the Word of the Lord proceeds to say, "*What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*" And if it be a divine commandment which has so closely joined and blended them together, who is he who, for any reason whatsoever, shall bid them forsake and separate from each other?

No doubt the ties which knit human hearts together are manifold, and equally various the modes of love. Divine wisdom, however, has been pleased to constitute, as quite a peculiar bond, the one at whose formation the words, *until death divide you*, have been uttered by consecrated lips; and if that bar have once been fixed, no human hand on earth either can or ought to remove it. And unquestionably this is what reason dictates, inasmuch as the marriage contract has no match in any other conjunction of human hearts. In all of these, no doubt, there is the desire of mutual identification, and on both sides a giving and taking. But nowhere does this take place

so fully as in the state of marriage, for in that there is the peculiarity that the twain become not merely one spirit, but in an equal degree *one flesh:* and this is a circumstance which gives to the *spiritual* betrothal a peculiar tenderness and intimacy, the reason being that all that is spiritual, when it attains to full power, emerges into view in the exterior of the flesh. For example, the light that shines in a man's heart, if it wax to a competent strength and intensity, beams from and irradiates his countenance. The same happens in wedlock. Indeed, if God have blessed a marriage with children, the husband and wife may actually behold manifested in their offspring how completely they have been blended together and become one, inasmuch as the spiritual and bodily nature of the child exhibits in close combination the idiosyncrasies of the father and the mother.

The divine intention of holy wedlock was at its first institution declared in the words: "The Lord God said, *It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.*" Accordingly a Christian wife has been appointed the helpmate of her husband, in order that through her he may obtain what no other helper or friend, how good soever, could possibly give him. For observe, if two persons are to be mutually helpful, the first and main requisite is that they should look upon one another not as strange or alien, but as identical each with the other. This alone is sufficient to show the impossibility that in any other fellowship there can be such reciprocal help and ministration as in the holy state of matrimony. It is true that the ties of affection between parent and child, brother and sister, are very sacred and tender, but they do not reach to so complete a community of mine and thine as obtains between man and wife; and moreover, it is only for a limited time that these parties consort together. The children grow up, and when the brothers and sisters come of age, each of them, as Luther says, seeks a nest of his own. In wedlock, however, what is there which is not common to husband and wife; and what other relationship in an equal

degree binds together the parties who have entered into it for the whole term of their lives? That is a sufficient reason why no friend, not even a mother or a child, can be so helpful to a man as a Christian wife.

There is, however, another reason why divine wisdom has ordained that the Christian wife should be above all others the *helpmate* of her husband. It is because she has been endowed with what the nature of the husband lacks, or what it cannot easily perform. The woman is, as holy Scripture on many accounts has called her, "the *weaker* vessel."[1] Her body is not made for so great exertion or severe labour as is that of the man. Nor yet has her mind been designed by God to explore the depths of wisdom or wield the reins of government. But what Christian women ought to possess as a heritage, and what has likewise in some measure been conferred upon them in their natural disposition, is the "hidden man of the heart, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,"[2] in order that they may humbly and affectionately and tenderly manage the domestic concerns and rule the house while the husband is labouring for it in the streets and broadways, or occupying himself with *public affairs*. Hear to this effect the description of Solomon: "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. . . . Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land."[3] To the same effect the apostle also writes: "Let the woman learn *in silence* with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be *in silence*. . . . Notwithstanding she shall be saved in child-bearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety."[4] By such helpfulness at home a married wife becomes in the true

[1] Pet. iii. 7.
[2] 1 Pet. iii. 4.
[3] Prov. xxxi. 10-13, 23.
[4] 1 Tim. ii. 11, 12, 15.

sense the husband's other *half.* So that, while complying with the requirements of his rank and vocation, he exerts himself for the greater part of the day away from home and with people on the street, he yet can enjoy a calm and easy mind, knowing as he does that his other half has been left at home to protect the household. No friend, supposing his intentions to be ever so good, can in these matters be a wife's substitute and perform her part.

And as by her quiet walk and decent management she is thus a help to her husband in the things of the outer man, so likewise is she by her feminine nature better qualified than any other friend to help him in what concerns the *inner* man. The part assigned to her is not to govern, but in all reasonable things to be obedient to her husband: she is to have nothing of her own, but in every respect to belong to him, for which reason she is called in Scripture "*woman.*"[1] Moreover, having been endowed with a quicker susceptibility of love than the man, she is thereby enabled more easily to feel as if they were her own the cares, and mortifications, and sorrows which befall her husband, and to lighten the burden for him by bearing a share of it. Besides, as the man has by nature a hotter and more unquiet blood, so that cares and mortifications agitate him more profoundly, and sooner excite him to reprisals; the pious wife, on the other hand, by her calmer frame of mind, and tenderer affection, can gently moderate the fire when it threatens too violent an outbreak, and pacify and dissipate the indignation ere it has time to draw furrows on the brow. Oh yes—

> Buy, if thou canst, to bless thy life,
> At any price, a faithful wife.

Such is the blessing of Christian wedlock, and it is not withheld even when God withholds what is wedlock's chief ornament and joy, nay, what may even be called its seal—viz., the fruit of the body. But if, over and above the blessing, God is

[1] Gen. ii. 23.

pleased to make a marriage fruitful, it then appears in the clearest light what the word meant when the wife was called a *help meet* to the man. When God vouchsafes children, He vouchsafes to marriage a crown of honour; for it is an honour to parents to be deemed worthy of giving birth to an immortal creature for His service. What an emotion is that which a father feels when into his arms is laid a living being which, through his instrumentality, has been brought into existence! When we look upon a new-born babe, is it not, as a father of the Church has said, "*as if we caught God's hands at work*"? Now in this crown of honour the wife has the principal share. She is the *mother of the life*, as Eve was called, that being the meaning of her name.[1] Hers is the bitterest part. With pain must she carry the babe in her womb, with pain bring it forth, and often with pain give it suck. It is she who in the house must watch for the growth and health of its body and foster the delicate germs of its spiritual life. Think not that the influence of women in the world is small. Nothing can be more certain than that *it is really from the nurseries that the world is governed*, so amazingly great is the power which mothers exert over the bodily and spiritual life of their children. How would the fathers succeed in the difficult task of bringing them up if left to themselves and without their wives as meet helpers? If, then, the hearts of husband and wife have previously been blended together, how perfectly do they become one when they have children, and when in these they see their virtues and faults reflected as in a mirror, when in common they share sorrow or joy for a human soul, which the grace of God has vouchsafed to them as a peculiar gift, and when in prayer their hands are folded together upon the head of an innocent child! "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is His reward."[2]

Ought, then, a contract which binds two human souls so closely as that they really become each one the other's half, to be broken for any cause soever save the one which the Lord

[1] Gen. iii. 20. [2] Psalm cxxvii 3.

has Himself specified? What is it that should cut asunder a bond which He has twined? Shall severe and incurable disease, shall madness itself? Shall a fall so great as even to entail public disgrace? Oh no; when love has once fused the hearts of a married pair into one, it should help them to bear the very worst of evils. And even though the hearts were never from the first properly united, nor God consulted in the making of the contract, does not the contract still continue holy which has received His priestly sanction, and over which the words, *Until death divide you*, have been pronounced? If the twain have given their consent in the presence of God, shall man presume to separate what He has joined together? Perhaps it was in thoughtlessness that thou didst choose thy mate, and thou hast since repented; but, friend, didst thou not know that this was a contract which none but God could break, and He by death? And if that was known to thee, why didst thou not use due precaution? Why didst thou rush into it, as if it had merely been the purchasing of a piece of furniture or the renting of a house? Marriage is more than a mere barter of bonnets. Reflect now and learn, since thou didst not learn it before, what the proverb says, "He who marries in haste will repent at leisure." Ought the contract to lose its sacredness because thou wert thoughtless? Let the bond once be relaxed and there will be a great many still more thoughtless marriages. The more you give, the more will be taken. They say that the fairest *garland* of a man's life is a *happy* marriage; and it is also true that an *unhappy* one is its heaviest *cross*. But if the man himself have bound the birch, ought he to shrink when God beats him with it? My friend, if it was with a thoughtless heart that you rushed into these bonds, only believe that to cure a thoughtlessness so great there is no more powerful remedy than the bonds themselves.

"If," says Luther, "thou hast a sick consort, do not, for thy life, take another, but serve God in him, and nurse him, and be persuaded that he has been sent by God into thy house to be to thee a sacred thing, and to help thee to win heaven.

And blessed art thou if thou recognisest this gift and blessing, and takest care of thy husband in his sickness for God's sake. Let God take care for thee, and be assured that He will give thee grace, and not lay on thee a heavier burden than thou art able to bear."

Again, he says: "Hast thou an *ill-natured* wife? There is no nicer cross than such a wife. It can sift the dross out of a man more effectually than Satan himself." As for other hardships or heartaches which thy marriage may entail, especially if they be without thy fault, only submit to them *in faith*, and thou wilt see that on God's part they were not ill intended.

It is true the Lord says that on account of the hard-heartedness of the people Moses was permitted to relax the commandment given by the Almighty in Paradise, and to allow a writing of divorcement: and for the prevention of worse evils the civil magistrate among ourselves may be constrained to grant a like indulgence. But the man who wishes to belong to the flock of Christ owns neither Moses *nor yet the civil magistrate* for his master. He owns the Lord alone, and the Lord has said, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her which is put away committeth adultery."[1] If, then, thou wouldst have Christ for thy master, thou must take up the cross which He lays upon His disciples. Remember that the heavy rod was of thine own making, and try to learn patience and faith under its strokes.

Ah me! if our youth would but more deeply ponder what it is to choose a partner to be of one spirit and one flesh with them for the whole of their pilgrimage on earth, their choice would not be made in the false glare of a theatre or ball-room. *Till death divide you*, would ring perpetually in their souls. In the light of day they would choose, and by the light of God's Word they would try their partner, seek the advice of Christian friends, and not join hands until they were sure of the divine Amen.

[1] Matt. xix. 9.

61.

Marriage is a Mystery.

God knits Himself to man in wedlock's ties;
Oh do not then the holy state despise:
And if its real beauty thou wouldst see,
Let that great marriage thine ensample be.

Eph. v. 21-33. "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church: and He is the Saviour of the body. Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church: for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."

HOW indescribable the majesty here assigned to marriage in being set forth as an image of the bond by which Jesus and His Church are connected! "Yea," says Luther,

"so highly does God esteem the marriage state, that by His only Son He has implicated Himself in its bonds, and thereby been united to us." It is impossible but that every Christian must keep marriage holy and undefiled, and guard against all lewdness and other sin, according to the exhortation of St Paul, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour."[1] I repeat, no Christian who has recognised in wedlock the type of the Lord's sacred espousal to the Church, can fail to keep it holy and undefiled. "It is a great mystery," says the apostle, signifying that the words in which holy Scripture speaks of the marriage bond depict at the same time the deep-felt love with which the Lord has devoted Himself to His Church and become one flesh with it.

Why, then, O men, do you still seek for rules and precepts to guide your conduct in married life so as to be acceptable to God, seeing that you have before you the sacred and revered example of Jesus Christ loving His Church even unto death? And, ye women, why do ye also ask for direction how to become good wives in humility and obedience, when you have before you the worthy example of the Christian Church which has given itself as spouse to the Saviour? "They two shall be one flesh," are the words of holy Scripture. Mark, then, first of all, as here foreshadowed in the case of Christ and the Church, how husband and wife may be made one flesh by love. Holy Scripture calls the Church Christ's body, as being "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all,"[2] and by this name intimates that the two are wedded to each other in the same way as we see the soul and the body are, which have so thoroughly coalesced that nothing external can befall the body which the soul does not at the same time feel along with it; and neither can the soul be either sick or healthy without infecting the body with its sickness or health. The apostle has also depicted the marriage of Christ and the Church under a different emblem, calling Him the Church's Head and the

[1] 1 Thess. iv. 3, 4. [2] Eph. i. 23.

Church His members. Now there is no joy or sorrow experienced by the members which the head does not share; and, on the other hand, if the noble head be sick, must not the whole body suffer with it? The most obvious lesson, therefore, which this high example proclaims is, that the love of husband and wife should be so great, that in regard to all good things, whether visible or invisible, there should be no question between them of mine and thine, but that whatever belongs to the one ought equally to be the other's, whether sweet or sour, good or bad.

Although, however, the twain—soul and body, head and members—have thus been made one, and neither can any longer continue apart and independent of the other, still their business and vocation are different, for to the soul and to the head pertains the right of government, whereas the appointed office of the body and members is to serve. Accordingly holy Scripture has everywhere assigned to the husband this prerogative of the head, and has specially said of him that he is the "image and glory of God, but the woman is the glory of the man;"[1] the reason being, that to the man more than to the woman has been given the ability to wield the sceptre with kingly spirit, and kingly power and might; whereas to the woman, as the man's helpmate, the duty is assigned of carrying out his ideas, aiding and serving him in the work and business of his life, and becoming in this way his image, just as he himself is the image of God. The meaning of the apostle is this: the man is already in himself a complete and entire human being, perfectly able to fulfil the end for which he is here on earth destined by God, as is shown us by the example of the Lord Jesus; the woman, however, as the apostle tells us, was created for the man's sake to do such things as are subservient to the completion of the work which he has to do. For this reason the apostle has also required that the woman shall have a badge of power (that is, of her husband's power) upon her head,[2] by which he means the veil,

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 7. [2] 1 Cor. xi. 10.

as the acknowledgment of her subordinate position, her weakness, and liability to fall. No less as regards things spiritual has the man been appointed to take the lead in knowledge and doctrine, as the apostle ordains, saying, "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church."[1] In virtue, then, of these prerogatives, the man is the image of Jesus Christ, who, as He is the Head of the Church and the Saviour of the body, exercises the whole government of it, and prescribes to the members what they ought to do. And high and honourable, O men, is the post to which you have thus been preferred. Not in vain, however, has it been written, "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." For it is to you that the apostle addresses the following words: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies." Do you know, then, O men, how it was that Christ the Lord loved the Church, when He came down from the glory of the Father, and for our sakes became poor; when He took upon Him our miserable flesh, emptied Himself wholly of His greatness, and then shed for us His holy and precious blood? Well, is it a love like this with which you devote yourselves to your wives—these weaker vessels? Do you seek to inspire their minds with great and divine thoughts? Do you employ them in no other than divine works? Do you set before them a heavenly example, and with great humility and kindness of heart do you forgive them and bear with their infirmities, endeavouring that the choice you have made

[1] 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35.

of them to be the partners of your life, may conduce at the same time to make them partakers of the everlasting and imperishable life in God? Observe, the wife is made subject to you by the divine Word; but are not you made subject to the wife by love? And if you essay to love after the example of Christ the Lord, you must necessarily begin at the same time to *serve*, according to the words that once fell from His sacred lips, "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister;" and just as His whole life was an incessant ministry of love, by which He sought to captivate the heart of His Church. Yes; it is indeed a high and arduous post of honour to which you are promoted by the designation of *head* of the wife here conferred upon you by the Holy Spirit, even as Christ is the Head of the Church.

On the other hand, O wives, be it your endeavour to win the affection of your husbands, as the Church does that of Christ. That which a Christian Church principally seeks is, to put away all that is its own, and to appropriate only what is the Lord's; to renounce the tastes and desires that are proper to itself; to have no business or vocation other than that which the Lord and Master has prescribed, and to count every behest of His its joy and pleasant food. Even so be it yours to abnegate whatever is your own, seeing that God has made you the *helpers* of your husbands, to have no business but theirs, and to do whatever you do for their sake. Yea, as your duty is to forget not only yourselves in their cause and for their interests, but likewise your father and mother, and sister and brother, does not this imply that you ought to become one flesh with them, just as they on their part are bound to forsake father and mother and cleave to you? Inasmuch, however, as the mutual propension which makes two hearts one may come from the flesh and not from the spirit, husband and wife should give heed to the words of the apostle, "Submitting yourselves to one another *in the fear of God;*"[1] and to the lesson which he teaches in another passage, where

[1] Eph. v. 21.

he says: "Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, *in the Lord.* For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God." [1] For as thy husband, however good he may try to be, is not Christ the Lord, what is enjoined upon thee is not a *blind* obedience. God's service must go before that of all earthly masters; and therefore before the service which is due by a wife to her husband and master. "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye," [2] is what a Christian wife will have courage to say even to her husband, if he asks her to do anything which Christianity forbids, as the apostle Peter had courage to say it to his magistrates. This must not, however, be interpreted in a carnal sense, as if at every unfair requirement it were right in the wife to resist the husband. The apostles only resisted the magistrates when required by them to suppress the word of God and to keep silence; and even so a Christian wife is at liberty to refuse obedience only in things which her conscience tells her would imperil the salvation of her soul. Moreover, in respect that it does not pertain to the wife to teach but to seek doctrine and instruction from her husband, in the event of his subjecting her conscience to sore grievance, her duty would be to apply to intelligent friends and ministers for advice. In like manner, ye men ought not to be subject to your wives in *the love* that springs from the flesh, but solely in that which has its source in the spirit. And because the apostle was alive to the danger of loving a wife from a carnal motive, he, at a time when great hardships impended over Christians, dissuaded the brethren and sisters from marrying, because, as he said, "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife." [3] Conjugal affection owes its origin not singly and solely to the Holy Spirit, but partly to the fact that human beings, by their

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 11, 12. [2] Acts, iv. 19. [3] 1 Cor. vii. 32, 33.

natural constitution, and rank, and mode of life, are adapted for each other—which is another evidence of the hand of God, and of His intention to bring them together. It is possible, therefore, that the husband and likewise the wife may choose to be mutually complaisant and helpful, solely from such natural attachment, whereas both have but one Master, at whose service they ought chiefly to aim, even in serving one another. Let married persons, therefore, in all things "prove what is that good and acceptable will of God."[1]

If there be any who entertain conscientious scruples about the lawfulness of marriage, whether founded upon the apostle's words, "concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me,"[2] (I answer) "*It is good for a man not to touch a woman.* Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband:"[3] or upon the words of our Lord,—"There be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it:"[4] or upon the fact that our blessed Lord and Master did not Himself enter into the state of matrimony,—the following considerations ought to be weighed. In the first place, as regards the example of our Saviour, it cannot be conceived that, possessing as He did such immeasurable perfection, He could possibly have found a friend, and far less a wife, fit in a human sense to be His other half. In the second place, His divine heart was far too great to have any need of such a helper, or to be satisfied with any single soul. Rather had He from the beginning espoused for His bride a great Church, which no man can number, even the vast multitude of those who should believe in His name. And this Church has been not only His bride, but His posterity: His bride, to whom it was His pleasure to betroth and unite Himself in wedlock; His posterity, of whom it is written, "He shall see His seed, and the

[1] Rom. xii. 2.

[2] They had asked his opinion on the subject of marriage in general.

[3] 1 Cor. vii. 1, 2.

[4] Matt. xix. 12.

pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand."[1] For being the High Priest of the New Testament, He had a heart that was utterly consumed by loving zeal for the redemption and spiritual regeneration of the unnumbered miserable souls with whom He had entered into actual wedlock by taking upon Him their flesh and blood. And now, among His followers, there is many a priestly soul whose vocation here on earth is to beget only a spiritual offspring; and such are they of whom He says that they have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake, having been inclined neither by the flesh nor the spirit to devote themselves solely to a single heart. No private Christian, however, let him be as pious as he may, can either *take on* or *choose* for himself so priestly and spiritual a frame of mind; and this the Lord expresses when He says, "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." And to the same purpose as his Master the apostle has said, "If they cannot contain, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn."[2] And again, "Every man has his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that."[3] What he means is, that no one ought to plume himself on account of such a gift, or fancy that it alone raises him above all others in the kingdom of God, inasmuch as it rather is quite a peculiar gift, and, on the other hand, *other gifts may be given to other men and in other ways, which are quite as excellent.* If, again, the scruple as to marriage rests upon the manifold sins which are committed in it, such as anger, impatience, and, above all, carnal indulgence, and if that is thought reason enough why the child of God ought to remain unmarried, it must be considered that, being the most ancient of all states, and an institution of God Himself, it cannot possibly be worse than any other. On the contrary, the Epistle to the Hebrews declares that "marriage is honourable in all;"[4] and St Paul speaks in strong terms against the prohibition of it, saying, "The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits,

[1] Isa. liii. 10. [2] 1 Cor. vii. 9. [3] 1 Cor. vii. 7. [4] Heb. xiii. 4.

and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; *forbidding to marry.*"[1] Against such teachers Luther also inveighs, saying: "It is admitted by all that the life of married persons is not wholly pure and sinless; but, on the other hand, tell me what other divinely-instituted state is without sin. On the same principle I ought never to preach a sermon; no man or maid ought to enter into service; the magistrate ought not to wield the sword, nor the nobleman to mount his horse. In this earthly life we shall never be so pure as to perform any work without sin. The article, 'I believe in the *forgiveness of sin*,' must keep its place in the Creed; and the petition in the Lord's Prayer, '*Forgive us our debts*,' must be daily used. Thou mayst be certain, therefore, that neither in respect of thy spiritual nor bodily man has God elected thee to belong to the priestly souls, who have nothing else on earth to do but to serve Him and advance His cause. Do not, therefore, let thy conscience trouble thee about a state of life which God instituted in Paradise, and which in truth may become above many, nay, above all other states, a school of moderation and patience, and especially of ministering charity."

O Thou chaste and holy Priest, who, even while sojourning here upon earth, and wearing our flesh and blood, didst cherish only a spiritual love, sanctify our natural love that it may be more and more spiritualised. Free it from all defilement, impurity of heart, selfishness, and obduracy. Teach us to love each other as Thou hast loved us. Oh, how well in the state of marriage may the selfish heart expand and fuse itself into another! How in this special school may it daily and hourly learn submissively to minister and affectionately to obey! Make us, O Thou heavenly and holy Love, helpers to each other for the *life eternal.* Our desire is to be so by mutual admonition when deviating from the right way, by confessing in Thy presence wherein we lack resemblance to Thine image, by strengthening each other for prayer and supplication, and

[1] 1 Tim. iv. 1-3.

encouraging to those works of compassion and charity which are acceptable to Thee. We desire, O holy High Priest, to please each other better only by seeking to be more pleasing *to Thee.* We feel that in proportion as our love and devotedness to Thee increase, so likewise does our love to each other. The flame burns with a pure and heavenly brightness, and melts and blends our hearts more closely into one. What cannot be overcome, what cannot be borne, when hearts are linked together in Thee! Help us, O Lord, to love each other in Thy love.

62.

Fear the Lord, and it shall be well with thee and thy House.

A house, if founded in the fear
Of God, aloft its top will rear,
And touch the very sky.
For as the happy inmates breathe
Celestial air the roof beneath,
They must to heaven be nigh.

PSALM CXXVIII. 1. "Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in His ways."

HERE we have the living fountain of the blessing which rests upon the conjugal and domestic state. When worldly prudence attempts to choose a wife and form a household, it can apply its hand only to so much of the work as has its seat upon earth, and is visible to the eye of sense. It builds, so to speak, the first and the second story, adds cornice and pediment, and the fabric presents a fair appearance—but it has no foundation. Whenever you see the household of a married pair continuing to defy every storm, you may be sure that it

rests upon a sure foundation, lying beyond the reach of human sense, and that that foundation is *the fear of the Lord.* To the fear of the Lord, therefore, the holy Psalmist has wisely given a place in front of this beautiful psalm, which celebrates the blessing that descends upon conjugal and domestic life. It is as if he wished to say to all, Friends, he who would see a flourishing tree with widespread branches and ample foliage, must first of all take care to have it well rooted in the ground. And in like manner, if thou desire—and none can desire a worthier object—to have a wife as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house, and children like olive-plants round about thy table, to eat abundantly of the labour of thy hands, and to bequeath to thy children's children an after-enjoyment of the blessing, set about vigorously to pray that the Spirit of God may, above all other things, implant a right fear in thy heart, that so in all the concerns of thy station and married life thou mayst never be found walking on other ways than those which are pleasing in the Lord's sight. Long ago they used to sing—

> Seek God in every word and deed,
> And all you do will well succeed;
> But if you try another plan,
> Your luck will end where it began.

Verse 2. "For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee."

"It is not," says Luther, "the leather that feeds the cobbler, nor the crop the farmer, nor his sermons the preacher. These are but the means and appliances by which God provides them with food." In like manner it is the divine will that the labour of the husband should establish the household; and this labour, when exercised in obedience to God, is a daily sacrifice of praise, which man and wife working together present to Him as a sweet-smelling savour from morn to night. More than this, it serves, like the flap which drives midges away, to expel from the mind, especially of married people, the unprofitable

thoughts and foolish talk which the flesh might otherwise breed. It is, no doubt, the curse and penalty of sin that man must eat his bread in the sweat of his countenance; but, as in so many other instances, so likewise in this has Christ the Lord converted the curse into a blessing; and now the labour, which a Christian man cheerfully commences with prayer and finishes to the glory of God, does nothing but bless both his temporal and spiritual life. For this reason ought every Christian not merely to take home the admonition of the son of Sirach, "Hate not laborious work, neither husbandry, *which the Most High hath ordained;*"[1] but rather, while his hands are busy, to thank and praise God for having by his dear Son changed that which was an evil into a good. Mark how cheerfully the Word of God here calls aloud to man, while sweating and fretting with discontented mind over his daily task, "Happy shalt thou be, and *it shall be well wtih thee.*" Inasmuch, then, as there can be no deception in the words which the Holy Spirit addresses to the numerous host of God's children, who are bearing the burden and heat of the day, there must of necessity be a pearl concealed in the cup, although it often seems very bitter to the taste. Yes, and to myself I will now say, "It is well with thee;" even though thy hand and cheek are glowing hot, and the sweat is dripping from thy brow: in spite of all thy toil "it is well with thee;" for, being as thou art a reconciled child of God, thy labour is a sacrifice of obedience with which the Father is well pleased, and which He will cause to prosper, so that it shall issue in good to thyself, to thy family—yea, to thy fellow-men, both in town and country.

Verse 3. "Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive-plants round about thy table."

How plainly in these words the royal Psalmist shows that God is not hostile to an honourable marriage, but makes it

[1] Ecclus. vii. 15.

bear unspeakably precious fruit! This he does in two beautiful emblems, in which he compares the wife to a vine and the children to the olive. These are the noblest among the trees, and it is from them that the two choicest juices are derived. Just as a vine climbs to the top of a house, fastens to it on all sides, and at every window and door offers its sweet and sparkling clusters; even so, the Psalmist here tells us, does a wife in this so poor and feeble, so hot and toilsome, life of ours, offer for the refreshment of an industrious husband pleasant fruits of every sort and in every way. Indeed no language could more beautifully depict how great and desirable a good a faithful wife is to her husband. And just as olive-branches placed around a banqueting-table diffuse verdure and freshness, and give to the food a double relish, so do his children impart life and spirit to the mid-day meal, and the father is recruited from his fatigue, and keenly enjoys his daily bread, even although sweetened by nothing else. Let the reader, however, be careful to note what in the first verse is laid as the foundation of such happiness. For be assured, that if a household is not founded in the fear of the Lord, nor their walk well-pleasing in His sight, a lamentable contrast to it all will ensue. In place of a vine thy wife will become a thistle-head, which will sting thee on whatsoever side it is taken hold of; and thy children nettles, which will burn thee wherever thou comest into contact with them. And as when the dam gives way the waters brook no control, so who can control the variance which breaks out in a family between husband and wife, or between parents and children, as break out it inevitably will when the fear of God is cast behind, for none but they who fear God ever try to be peacemakers. It is written of an angry man, that "a stone is heavy and the sand weighty, but a fool's wrath is heavier than them both. Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous."[1] And of a bad wife it is said, "I had rather dwell with a lion and a dragon, than to keep house with a wicked woman. All wickedness is but little to the wickedness of a woman."[2] The mean-

[1] Prov. xxvii. 3, 4.

[2] Ecclus. xxv. 16, 19.

ing is the same when Solomon avers, "A continual dropping on a rainy day and a contentious woman are alike."[1] For these reasons, let him who has yet to choose a partner set about in the true fear of God, and then the Lord will give him one who will become as a vine round about his house. "House and riches," says the wise man, "are the inheritance of fathers; but a prudent wife is *from the Lord*."[2] And again: "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that *feareth the Lord*, she shall be praised."[3]

Verse 4. "Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord."

If, then, thy heart be set upon obtaining such a blessing, be sure to make the fear of the Lord the foundation on which thou rearest the fabric of thy conjugal state; and in order that thy marriage may be blessed, ask God to make the match, and Christ to be a guest at the wedding, as He once was at that in Cana. He will then be a third party in the contract; and wherever He is present there cannot fail to be also a blessing. And if thou art conscious of receiving it, forget not to express to Him thy gratitude. To the unbelieving eye, the fact that thou hast a wife and children, and eatest the labour of thy hands, appears to be the work of nature; but he who has the eye of faith sees nothing in it but the blessing of the Lord, and cannot cease presenting to Him oblations of thankfulness and praise. The more he cherishes a believing frame of mind, and discerns in wife and child the imprint of a divine gift, the more does he endeavour to discharge the gratitude of his heart in *good works*. The sight of his wife—the goodly vine—recalls to his mind the beautiful proverb of our pious fathers,—

Hold thou thy married wife
Dear as thy very life.
She will thy goods protect,
And win for thee respect,
And be thy faithful friend
Till death thy days shall end.

[1] Prov. xxvii. 15. [2] Prov. xix. 14. [3] Prov. xxxi. 30.

And when he looks upon his olive-plants—the children—he says,—

> Come ye, who great and mighty are,
> Oh, come and humbly minister
> To the yet stainless child;
> And deem not this an office mean,
> For heavenly *angels* watch unseen
> Around the undefiled.

Verse 5. "The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem."

So then, as here we learn, cities are built up by the families whom the Lord blesses. How high in His favour must stand the married pair who fear Him, seeing that on their account He promotes the good of cities, and for the sake of the vine and olive-branches which thou hast at home upholds kings and magistrates, and gives peace, more precious than gold, to the land! It is true that the Almighty strengthens the hands of civil governors by special methods known only to Himself, and yet any one can observe how peace and the blessing from on high, when they have first entered into private families, help also to fortify the thrones of princes. For it certainly is the case, as the apostle has said, that "if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?"[1] It is impossible that peace can dwell in the land, or encompass the throne, unless with a blessing in its train it dwell in private houses. And no small advantage is it when, for the sake of thy pious household, God is pleased to build up the king's throne, and bestow the gift of peace on the whole land. For what would it profit thee though thy house were filled with all manner of good things, and though thy wife were as a vine and thy children like olive-plants, if every villain had the power to lay violent hands upon them? Well does the German proverb show how precious a gift is peace when it says that the head of a family, if possessed of two cows, does

[1] 1 Tim. iii. 5.

well to part with one of them in order to be able to keep and reap undisturbed the good of the other.

And you great and mighty ones, who occupy the seat of government in a land, well would it be were you more seriously to consider by what means the honour and sanctity of the married state would best be maintained, seeing, as you here do, that for the sake of a husband and wife, who fear God and rightly govern their household, the divine grace promises its blessings to whole countries.

Verse 6. "Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel."

The Psalmist, desiring to sum up all the good things with which God blesses wedlock when conducted in His fear, and to depict all the joy with which it is crowned, does not omit to speak of the supreme delight vouchsafed to parents when they see their seed multiplied after them; for if they have succeeded in sowing the fear of God in their children, they then also behold how every seed bears fruit, in some ten, and in some an hundred fold. Oh what a blessing it is when in the evening of his days an aged Simeon lays himself down upon the bed of languishing, and when the olive-branches which he once planted, and which have since themselves become fruitful stocks, assemble around him with all their little shoots, and his spirit departs in peace, upborne by the prayers of the many souls whom he himself first taught to pray!

O blessed household, which as with a wreath
The *fear of God* entwines! O life that flows
Calm and unruffled by the tempest's breath,
Alike as when unclouded sunshine glows;
For at the sacred spell around it thrown,
The awe-struck storm forgets its angry groan.

Say, how can heart with heart have true communion
Till in *God's heart* they both their centre find?
The *spirits' Father*[1] gives to spirits union,
And tunes to harmony the will and mind.

[1] Heb. xii. 9.

'Tis only when a common stem they grace,
That two fair rosebuds mutually embrace.

And must not peace find in *that* house a home
Where reigns one sovereign will without dispute,
Giving discretion for command to some,
To others skill, and strength to execute;
So that, even in this world of strife, we see
How heavenly angels dwell in unity?

They ply their several tasks, but unattended
By irksomeness of toil is all they do.
It is as if some *angel* had descended
To ease their burdens, and their strength renew.
The curse that mingles sweat with toil is gone,
And from above the Lord rains blessings down.

O happy house! O life like that in heaven,
With *fear of God* as with a garland crowned!
Let first of all the heart to Him be given,
Ere earthly idols there a shrine have found;
And should affection's stream in us run dry,
He from the fountain will the lack supply.

63.

Suffer little Children to come unto Me.

Thou sayest, The babe is MINE,
I'll train him as I list;
But, sure, ere he was thine,
He appertained to Christ.
And wilt thou not a charge so dear,
FOR HIM *who lent it to thee, rear?*

PSALM cxxvii. 3. "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is His reward."

MATT. xix. 14. "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

EPH. vi. 4. "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to

wrath ; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

"MANY children make many prayers, and many prayers bring much blessing." Yes, verily, when we reflect how highly God must esteem the man to whom He gives children, we see that there ought to be no end of prayer and supplication and thanksgiving. That He has sent children into a house is of itself a sufficient reason for Him to send His blessing too. To give existence and life is a work which the divine Majesty has usually reserved to Himself. What, then, shall we think of giving existence and life *to an immortal being made in the divine image!* How dreadful that so excellent a grace is by men contaminated with sin, so high a prerogative dishonoured in the service of lust! If mere existence in this present world is of no worth, unless the present world become a training-school for the world to come, how audacious to bestow an earthly existence upon a human spirit without a serious purpose, formed in the sight of God, of training it for heaven! He commits a wrong who becomes a father and does not at the same time undertake the sacred *duty* of rearing his child for eternity.

What the Lord has affirmed concerning them ought to be enough of itself to make the care of the young one of the holiest occupations in life. Once when the Twelve were disputing with each other which of them should be the greatest, He took a child and set him in the midst of them: and when He had taken him in His arms, He said unto them: "Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but Him that sent me."[1] On another occasion He put His hands on the children, and prayed and said: "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."[2] "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in

[1] Mark, ix. 36, 37. [2] Matt. xix. 14.

no wise enter therein."[1] No doubt some who pretend to be masters of Scripture have wrongly interpreted these sayings, inferring from them that the Lord looked upon little children as being in all respects spotless and perfect, like the blessed angels in heaven; but it is said that Adam begat children "in his own likeness, after his image,"[2] and in Adam the image of God was then defaced. If the Lord have set them up as a pattern to us in one respect, He has not done so in all, and Paul writes: "Brethren, be *not* children in understanding."[3] What the Lord loved in the little ones was, their knowing so well that they cannot stand upon their own feet, but must seek wisdom and strength and welfare at their mother's bosom. Of a like disposition were the persons whom he enlisted in His service, and only such as these have admission into the kingdom of heaven. Not a few interpreters suppose that He spake also of children when He said, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea;"[4] and again, in a subsequent verse,—"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."[5] In my opinion, however, when He so spake, He had in His eye those of His disciples who possessed a childlike frame of mind, and who clung to *His* breast as children do to a mother's; for He specifies "one of these little ones *which believe in me*." Inasmuch, however, as such disciples have the same disposition spiritually which little children have naturally, it may doubtless be said that they both belong to the same family, and that therefore it ought not to be forbidden to apply to the one what has been affirmed of the other.

According, therefore, to the word of Christ Himself, the jewel in the souls of children is the *sacred trustfulness* with which they look to their parents for strength and counsel and

[1] Luke, xviii. 17. [2] Gen. v. 3. [3] 1 Cor. xiv. 20.
[4] Matt. xviii. 6. [5] Matt. xviii. 10.

help; and what He desires is, that they who love Him should repose in Him a similar trust, and such a trust for certain He will never deceive. Is it possible, then, that any parents who are leaning on the bosom of the Saviour with the same reliance with which their children lean upon theirs, and who are constrained to confess that He never gave them a stone when they asked for bread,—is it possible, I repeat, that such parents can ever prevail upon themselves to give to their children in place of bread a stone, and in place of a fish a serpent? Oh no, is the answer from the heart of every father and every mother. Oh no, they cry, and yet they *do it.* For this, in fact, is done by all who leave untutored, or at least without the nurture and admonition *of the Lord*, the early age when children cling to parents with absolute confidence, and ever seek to catch their eye, as if imploring, Do *you* guide us, for *we* cannot guide ourselves. What else is the eye of your child constantly directed to yours, and confidently endeavouring to read what he ought to do, but a perpetual petition to the effect, Give, oh give me spiritual bread? And when, in place of giving them that, you leave them without the nurture and admonition of the Lord, or any direction as to the way in which they ought to go, you really give them what the Scripture calls, "*offence;*" meaning by the term, *an occasion of temptation and fall.* And think what the Lord has said respecting those who offend a youthful soul, whether it be a disciple or a child. He has said, that to be drowned in the lowest depths of the sea, which was the severest punishment inflicted upon criminals in this present world, would still be light when compared with that which is reserved for them in the world to come. Alas! it would be impossible to number the parents and teachers who, according to this saying, would certainly perish, were there not comfort in the thought that they know not what they do.

It goes to one's heart to see a young tree which, while still slender and soft, might have been trained to grow straight and bear fruit, and show a beautiful head, abandoned instead as a prey to insects of every kind, and left exposed to injuries of

the weather and the rough hand of the forest thief. It is a terribly earnest saying, that *to corrupt a child is as great a crime as to seduce a maid.* Yes, for the souls of children are *virgin* souls; and if the angels, who see the face of God, are not ashamed to minister to them, how can men,—how can you who are parents and teachers, be negligent in such a service? In fact, if it be right to speak of meriting a divine reward, there is no merit so enviable as that of saving the soul of a child. The noblest of all missions is into the world of youth. This is the field which yields the increase of an hundred-fold.

Now, what we require to give to children we must ourselves first of all possess. The least of such gifts is daily bread, and with respect to it man is not worse off than the beast of the field and the fowl of the air. Kin cleaves to kin, and the tree does not disown its own fruit.

> Poor though she be, a mother's arm
> Will shield her babe from cold and harm.

And so parents take thought for the daily bread of their children, and provide it, not merely for the present, but even for the future. Here, however, the devil lays for them a special snare; for in how many cases do we find that a *niggardly* spirit enters the house along with the *children?* But if there be truth in Luther's saying, that God, who is rich, allots to every child committed to a parent an inheritance of its own, into possession of which it infallibly comes, whether the parents live or die, prosper in the world or come to poverty,—why wilt thou not rather say to thy children as Luther did to his, "I do not leave you *riches*, but I leave you a *rich* God"? How large soever may be the treasures which, by scrimping from morn to night, you may accumulate for your children, they will be a far smaller fortune than if you bequeathed to them a true and simple and sincere faith in the rich God of heaven.

The next thing which children are entitled to receive from parents is education and training for the station in life to which they are called. If it be true that next to the wife of his heart

a man can find no greater good upon earth than a *profession* which he loves, and if this be a matter upon which parents have to decide for their children, how great the responsibility which it involves! What is it, then, that generally determines the choice which parents make? Is it a serious attention to the *voice of God*, uttering itself in the *circumstances* and *outward relations*, but most of all *in the capacity*, of the child? Alas! in how many cases is it not *caprice*, or *unbelieving parsimony*, or *ostentation*, or *conceit*, which decide the point? How many have been thrown into a false career by the mere whim of having the son take the father's place? How many by infidel niggardness, which insisted on *seeing* before it would trust, and how many more by *pride?* There is truth in the proverb—

> "Pity the man who takes in hand
> The task he does not understand,
> And what he could do lets alone,—
> No wonder he is soon undone."

Many have thus been shipwrecked, and frequently has it been the parents' fault. And yet, when the powers and capacities of the youth prove insufficient for the calling into which he was forced solely by their conceit, how often do they, in place of condemning themselves, revile God, and cry out *that nature had neglected and been a stepmother to their child!* whereas you yourselves have been the stepmothers, and would not listen to God's voice, who never meant your son to be an instrument for accomplishing great and mighty things. You grieve when your infant, in place of being hale and sound, comes into the world a *cripple*, and you would deem it the height of cruelty to make a cripple of him yourselves; and yet, ye proud and unbelieving parents, in the vanity that consumes you, make your children cripples in mind! For just as an instrument is put out of shape when pushed into a case which does not fit it, so may a man's whole nature be crippled and distorted when he is forced into a profession for which God never designed him. By such conduct foolish parents sin against their children, whose minds they deform—against God, to whose voice they

do not listen—and against their fellow-men, who are defrauded of the benefit of talents which might otherwise have profitably ministered to them.

The chief and peculiar gift, however, due by parents to children, is the *nurture of the inner man* and *tuition in the Word of God.* It is written, "The Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? *For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.*"[1] So highly did God esteem in His servant Abraham the bringing up of his children in piety! In this way, by the mere education of their offspring, may parents earn for themselves heaven or hell. In the passage where the apostle says of the woman, —"Notwithstanding she shall be saved *in child-bearing*, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety,"[2] he does not speak merely of bringing children into the world, but of what that infers—viz., their *up-bringing and tuition;* for he supposes that the mother herself continues in the faith, and, as a consequence, also understands the right way of bringing them up. Yes, fathers and mothers, to no teacher in the whole world has the task of *making Christians of your children* been made so easy as to you; for if confidence is a stretched-out hand, towards whom is the hand of a child stretched out more than towards his parents? You would count it a crime to offer them, when they are hungry and ask of you earthly bread, nothing at all, or perhaps a stone; and would it be no crime if, when they held out their hand for spiritual bread, you were to give them nothing, or, what is worse than nothing, falsehood in place of truth? Recollect that the worldly and sceptical spirit has not as yet interposed its bar, so that in the breast of a child holy truths may be lodged and take root so firmly that no wind of doubt or worldly pleasure shall ever be able to extirpate them. The season of childhood, however, passes

[1] Gen. xviii. 17-19. [2] 1 Tim. ii. 15.

away, and is succeeded by one in which there are no longer open doors in the mind for faith to enter. You must not, however, merely *teach* religion, you must *show* it to your children, and make your *life* their school-book. Of a truth the child who in seasons of deep affliction has learned from the example of his father or mother what it is *to pray*, will never in after-years, even though he may deviate very far from the path of truth, entertain a mean opinion of the power of prayer. At a more advanced stage of life he may make the acquaintance of pious men, but then doubts of their sincerity will always intrude. If, however, a child, until he has reached a riper age, has in his father's house witnessed the fear of God pervading, controlling, and animating all that was done, never more will he be able to doubt that piety is a great blessing and a truth. With whatever violence sceptical theories may assail him, still, just as no one can be brought by the most subtle arguments to doubt the reality of the material world around him, so no one who in his childhood has been privileged to gaze into the paradise of a pious life, can ever doubt of its existence; whereas he who has not yet entered it may hear it so depreciated and absurdly spoken of that he will never enter it at all.

Beware, ye who are parents, of *harsh severity;* but beware, also, of *lax indulgence.* "It is God's will," as Luther tells us, "that we should honour Him in two ways—the one, by loving Him as a *father* on account of the benefits He has bestowed or will bestow; the other, by fearing Him as a *judge*, who has punished us already and will do so again. For this reason it is that by the mouth of the prophet He says: 'If, then, I be a *father*, where is my *love?*[1] and if I be a *master*, where is my *fear?*'[2] Fathers are an image of God; and being both *fathers* and *masters* of their children, they ought to be both loved and feared." In former days, no doubt, it was too much the practice of fathers to govern by fear, especially among the heathen, where they exercised the right of putting their children to death.

[1] Luther's vers. [2] Mal. i. 6.

And it is for this reason that the apostle addresses to fathers, who were of heathen origin, the special exhortation "not to provoke their children to wrath."[1] To the same purpose Luther also says: "The child that has once been intimidated and disheartened is rendered useless for everything, and fears and trembles whatever he is called upon to do or attempt; and what is worse, if timidity have been allowed to take hold of his mind in childhood, there will be difficulty in rooting it out in his whole after-life; for as he was wont to quake at every word of father and mother, he will continue to tremble at the rustling of a leaf." In another passage he also says, "Children ought not to be too severely beaten. My father once beat me so severely that I fled from his sight, and sulked at him until he used means to reconcile me." Often, too, have pious parents gone astray by attempting to force the piety of their children by legal means, enjoining upon them prayer, and reading the Bible, and going to church, too exclusively as mere external works, and not reflecting that the piety of the young cannot wear the same serious face as that of the old. In this way they have embittered the cheerful sports of their boys and girls, and so hindered them, when grown up to be young men and women, from acquiring any experience of the world. A piety that has thus been made to wear a rueful countenance in youth has often been followed by a feeble and spiritless manhood, or has broken out into knavery in after years. Upon this subject, likewise, Luther, who was so great a foe to all hypocrisy, has beautifully said: "Here we have a king for our schoolmaster, and an excellent one he is. He does not forbid the young to go into company, or indulge in mirth, as the monks do with their disciples. In that case they would grow up mere dolts and blockheads, as even Anselm, who was the parent of monachism, has told us. For he says that a youth so tackled and secluded from society is like a fine young tree, which might have borne fruit had it not been planted in a pot. Monks imprisoned the young like birds in a cage, and thereby pre-

[1] Eph. vi. 4; Col. iii. 21.

vented them from seeing or hearing or talking with other persons. It is, however, dangerous for them to be thus left alone and cut off from society. They ought, on the contrary, to be allowed to hear and see and acquaint themselves with all manner of persons and things, in such sort, however, as to be kept in moderation and decency. Nothing is gained by monastic restraint. It is good for a young man to be much in company, provided at the same time he be trained up in integrity and virtue, and withheld from vice. The tyrannical constraint of monks is altogether hurtful; for mirth and amusements are as needful to youths as meat and drink, and are likewise the means of keeping them in health."

On the other hand, this age of ours has grown so soft and maidenish, that it will no longer suffer the rod to be used to children. According to the words of Luther, "False natural affection blinds parents to such a degree, that they care more for the flesh than for the souls of their offspring. It is, however, of the highest necessity that every parent shall pay a far greater and deeper and more constant attention to the *soul* of his child than to *the flesh, which has been derived from himself;* and that he shall look upon him in no other light than as a costly and immortal treasure committed by God to his care, in order that it may be neither stolen nor destroyed by the devil or the flesh." The wise man of old has said that "he that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes."[1] "Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell."[2] And the son of Sirach says: "Cocker thy child, and he shall make thee afraid; play with him, and he will bring thee to heaviness; laugh not with him, lest thou have sorrow with him, and lest thou gnash thy teeth in the end. Give him no liberty in his youth, and wink not at his follies. Bow down his neck while he is young, and beat him on the sides while he is a child, lest he wax stubborn, and be disobedient unto thee, and so bring sorrow to thine heart."[3] No doubt it is better if the end can be gained with-

[1] Prov. xiii. 24. [2] Prov. xxiii. 14. [3] Ecclus. xxx. 9-12.

out the use of the rod, for the human being has received from God an intelligent mind, and is capable of affection and confidence; and the preferable way is to begin when he is young to govern him by the feelings of his heart. Naturally, however, children are more affected by impressions made upon the senses than by reasons addressed to the understanding, and it is also profitable and right to employ such impressions in aid of the word of exhortation. Besides, it accustoms the child to understand what *retribution* is. The mere enticements of love and kindness in the hands of the heavenly Father sometimes fail of success with us, who are His perverse children, and so it behoves Him to have the rod always ready as well as the sweetmeats; and far less shall we be able to forego the use of it towards our children.

As soon, then, as a parent observes *that being always good* to his child is no longer *doing the child good*, he ought in all that relates to God and good morals wholly to forget that the child is his own flesh and blood, and to recollect that He, to whom the right to punish belongs, has put the rod into the hands of parents as well as of magistrates, and that it is their duty to use it—not, indeed, in the ebullition of carnal passion, but in the name and for the service of the Most High. A great Emperor, Frederick II., once said, "I have sometimes repented of my severity, but never of my clemency." There is, however, reason to fear that in these days of ours parents will have to say the very contrary. A *good intention* is now thought to make so many things good, and yet it can never falsify what experience has proved, that "*Well intended is oft lamented.*" Be persuaded, then, O parents! not to follow so much the inclinations of your heart, but rather the admonitions of holy Scripture, and in the training of the young prefer the Word and the law of God to all the suggestions of your own mind.

Dear Master, if life is to go well with us who are advanced in years, vouchsafe once more true piety to our youth. The Christian Church is now using great exertion in the way of sending the Gospel by missions to the heathen, and that, also,

is a work consistent with Thy holy will and commandment; but do Thou on that account all the more stir up among us who tarry at home, a warm zeal to institute missions without number among the young. Abroad Thy servants have much to do before they succeed in gaining the love and confidence of the heathen, and inducing them to *inquire* after the way of salvation; whereas our children affectionately look up with eager eyes, expecting to receive from us the bread of life. Yes, verily, if the man who aspires to be a preacher would but consider how many useful sermons he might preach by conversing more frequently with the little ones, and implanting divine truth more largely in their hearts, the kingdom of God might be built up among us much more effectually than has ever yet been done. Gracious God, incline Thy heart to our children; take upon Thyself the training of them, and make of them a holy nation, whose sacrifices of love and obedience may put to shame those who have grown to manhood and old age. Thy Word declares that "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise;" fill, then, their mouths with Thy praise, and mould them to be new foundation-stones for Thy spiritual Zion.

If holy zeal inflame thy breast
To publish to the world that they
Who love the Lord alone are blest,
And who His holy laws obey,
Choose the *soft* hearts among the throng
Of sinners, and address the *young*.

To climes beyond the sea you hie,
Where Hottentots and Hindoos dwell;
And though all day aloud you cry,
Few listen to the tale you tell.
While, lo! at home the children dear,
Around you flock the truth to hear.

What means the keen and silent gaze
They fix on yours? "Oh tell us true
What evil is, what good," it says;
"We want no other guide but *you*."
Why then the little ones disdain,
Or where a better audience gain?

64.

Do good unto all Men.

Pity the man condemned to see,
As guests around his table set,
Early and late, a company
To all of whom he is in debt.

Helpless myself, to Thee I cry,
Lord, save me from this misery;
For round me wife and children stand,
And man and maid on every hand,
And payment of their bills demand.

Gal. vi. 10. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

Gal. vi. 1. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

James, v. 19, 20. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

"YE shine as lights in the world," writes the apostle to the Philippian Church.[1] Do I shine as a light in the circle in which God hath set me? That is a question which sometimes goes suddenly like a sword through my soul. I am conscious that God has done more for me than for others. Am I, then, doing more than others for Him and them? I am conscious of having free access to a source of purifying and sanctifying power. Do men see the marks of this in my character? Is it manifest in me that I am of the number whom the Father "has delivered from the power of darkness, and

[1] Philip. ii. 15.

translated into the kingdom of his dear Son"?[1] The apostle Paul, in a certain passage, tells the Jews: "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you."[2] Oh, with what a weight does this reproach fall upon our hearts when we consider our daily walk! We Christians are the dignitaries of the Lord Jesus, and the disgrace which we bring upon ourselves attaches also to Him. And if the world is punished when in the person of the members it blasphemes the Head, the members must be doubly punished when it is through their offences that the Head is blasphemed.

Ah me! would that we did not so often neglect the near for the sake of more distant objects! How great a task it would be—a task sufficient to occupy a lifetime—were we to endeavour to become in our several stations good fathers and brothers, good husbands and masters! It is with the lesser circle we must always begin. If families are not properly trained, neither will cities be well founded; and if cities are not well founded, how can states subsist? Little things become slowly great, but great things suddenly little.

The Gospel is very *human* in its doctrines, very far removed from all fanaticism and exaggeration. It sets a high value upon the brotherhood of Christians, and justly so, for that connects us in one body with Christ. But, at the same time, the Gospel does not, for the sake of this spiritual bond, disown the sacred ties of blood relationship, and enjoins us as earnestly to rule well the household as to rule well the Church. The Saviour who said, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother,"[3] on another occasion, when nailed to the cross, thought of His mother before all others, and committed her to the care of the disciple whom He loved.[4] The same apostle who in one passage tells us, "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus,"[5] says in another, "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and

[1] Col. i. 13. [2] Rom. ii. 24. [3] Matt. xii. 50.
[4] John, xix. 27. [5] Gal. iii. 28.

is worse than an infidel;"[1] and while exhorting us, "as we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, *especially unto them who are of the household of faith*,"[2] he could wish himself "accursed from Christ for his brethren, *his kinsmen according to the flesh*."[3] This is truly a human aspect of the Gospel; for what would have become of the world and of the human race if the preaching of Christ, while knitting spiritual bonds, had everywhere dissolved the bonds of blood and the natural order of things? What would have happened if the Son had undone what had been done by the Father, and if the work of redemption had abolished the work of creation?

To *provide for* and *rule* each his own family is the first duty which holy Scripture requires of us.[4] Hence it is that charity has its limits; and just as "God is a God of order,"[5] so there is a certain order which it behoves us to observe in offering the sacrifices of beneficence. It is *human* when, as often as we look upon the hungry and naked, the eye is bedewed with tears and the hand is stretched out to relieve; but it is *Christian* not even then to obey the mere impulse of the tender heart, but first to inquire whether a still more urgent duty does not summon the tender heart and helping hand to some other object. *Counsel* ought always to precede *action*. There are many who understand so little the frame of mind which never proceeds to act without having first taken counsel with God, and which, if the case require, can for His sake be cruel in spite of its *tears*, that they call such deliberation cold-heartedness. Now, no doubt, the proverb says, and says well—

> "Do good to whomsoe'er it be;
> God will the act with favour see;"

and no doubt that is right to be done, if we have first made sure that they who are within the house shall not suffer hunger

[1] 1 Tim. v. 8. [2] Gal. vi. 10. [3] Rom. ix. 3.
[4] 1 Tim. v. 8; iii. 5. [5] 1 Cor. xiv. 33.

while they who are *without* are plentifully fed. There is, however, another proverb which says—

> "Do what thou dost, if good, with speed,
> But slowly ponder first the deed;"

and that requires also to be weighed when we are in the way of risking the head in order not to spoil the hat. Has not the Lord allotted to every man here on earth his own peculiar task, and appointed each of us His steward in the one particular place where we are stationed? He who attempts to fly higher than his wings can bear him will come to shame and loss; and, on the contrary, he who does what he can does what is enough. Our duty, therefore, is to arm ourselves with strong faith, even while shedding tears over the misery which we cannot alleviate, because there is so much other misery to be alleviated in our own immediate neighbourhood. There is a passage in which the Lord says, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs;"[1] and may not this, in a certain sense, be applied to the present case? No doubt there are many claims presented to me; but when the Lord puts one into the hand of a near relation, is not that one written with my own blood? In the case of those who here on earth are without father, mother, or brother, He who expressly calls Himself the "Father of the widow and the orphan," will Himself perform the father's part. At the same time, the bond of blood, sacred although it be, is not the only one that devolves upon us sacred duties. Under certain circumstances the spiritual bond, or even peculiar providences, may draw a stranger closer to me than my own flesh and blood. Our Lord did not commit the care of His mother to those who had sucked the same breast as Himself; for it was not to His brothers, but to His spiritual son, the disciple who had lain on His bosom, that He said, "Behold thy mother!" so that this also is a case in which we must apply

[1] Matt. xv. 26.

the precept, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind,"[1] and that before the Lord.

I know not how it happens, but never does a word of allusion to Christ escape with greater difficulty from my lips than when I am in the company of my nearest relatives; and there are many who have told me that they feel the same. There is, indeed, one way of explaining it; for *if these relatives do not like the word of admonition in any case*, we need not wonder that they dislike to hear it most of all from those who appear to them like an attendant conscience walking at their side, in asmuch as they then read in the face of the monitor a perpetual rebuke, even although his lips are silent. And is there not also on our own part something to cause the difficulty? for if those whom we admonish are our superiors, we fear their remonstrances; and if our inferiors, the liberties they may take. With the former, our well-intentioned admonitions may subject us to the suspicion of pride; and in the case of the latter, we must be content to have our children and servants applying our admonition as the rule by which they judge of our own walk. Very subtle are the motives which then come into play; for if the monitor be not perfectly in earnest in the practice of self-denial, he will be cautious ere he furnish those who must be submissive to him in all other things with the means of passing judgment upon his conduct, inasmuch as this would disturb his carnal ease of mind, and compel him to be watchful. Moreover, it must also be said that, properly speaking, we do enough when we give to any one the *opportunity* of believing. If it be possible in any way to carry doing good to excess, this is for certain oftenest done by preaching and exhortation. Solomon says, "Much preaching[2] is a weariness to the flesh."[3] It is likewise a weariness to the *soul*, and that not only of the hearer but also of the speaker. There is a possibility of preaching the ears deaf and the heart dead; for which reason it is even a duty to let the sound of the sweet message be heard only

[1] Rom. xiv. 5. [2] Eng. vers. "study." [3] Eccl. xii. 12.

from time to time, and to pause in the interval, that it may be seen whether the ear may not meanwhile have grown more acute. This is the way in which God Himself acts. He does not incessantly strive with a man, but brings him round by little and little. His mill grinds slowly, but makes the flour fine, and we must do the same. It is *impossible* to be perpetually preaching.

There was a time when I myself erred in this way. I always spoke too much. I now see that, as regards the weightiest of all matters, grown-up people are pretty much on a par with children. It is unquestionably a misfortune that in these our days teachers endeavour too much to lecture things into children instead of waiting to see whether the children would not spontaneously *bring them out*, or merely prompting them, so that with the help of the first syllable of the word the inner man might learn to speak it of himself. It is quite the same with grown-up people in spiritual matters. Nothing is so hurtful as over-preaching to them. If a man be very rich in words, his words are usually not very rich in sense, and in that case he may pull with all his might at the rope, and wonder that the bell does not ring; but the reason is, that it has a leathern tongue. Moreover, if the persons on whom the attempt to convert is made are parents or superiors, there arises the suspicion that it may have originated in pride. In this matter I have now learned to act more wisely; at the same time, I am not without apprehension that my present prudence and caution are often nothing else but the fear of man, and carnal sloth in disguise. To maintain a continual attitude of hostility towards those who are about us is painful to the flesh, and it is very pleasant to be at peace with the world; we therefore try to think that our neighbour's case is not so bad as we had believed; for how often does it happen that, as the poet says—

> "We wink politely at a brother's faults,
> That he may as politely wink at ours"!

We say to ourselves that we are not in a proper frame of mind

to interfere, but then we do not try to obtain the proper frame by looking up to the Lord. In short, we persuade ourselves that carnal prudence is spiritual wisdom ; keep silence when we ought to speak, and prefer disgraceful peace to honourable war. I know persons who anxiously try in every possible way not to let their nearest neighbours know how they stand affected towards the Gospel ; but that is what I will never do. I think it disgraceful for a man to be ashamed of his friend, and I cry, Woe to him who is ashamed of his God ! And of Thee, dear Master, I implore, permit me rather to go too far —even though it be from want of thought—in *bearing testimony* for Thee, than to deny Thee by keeping *silence.*

But much also depends upon the manner in which we do testify and speak. There was a time when, thinking it a commanded duty, I forced myself to do it. In that way, however, it is attended with no blessing. Water is always sweetest when welling from the fountain. Moreover, in cases of such forced admonition, we find that like the preacher and his discourse are the hearer and the effect produced upon him. Both are a bungle. Instead of putting on the *new man*, all that is put on is a *new cloak ;* and of an assumed manner it has been said that it fades away as ice melts in a summer day. No blessing cleaves to it. Out of sight out of mind. It is of absolute necessity that the sermons we preach shall gush from the lips like water from a spring, which cannot be stopped ; and the more freely it *issues*, the more easily likewise does it *enter*. And this takes place whenever love duly stirs and actuates our heart, so that we form a vivid conception of our brother's spiritual misery, and of the salvation of which he might be made to partake ; while, at the same time, we have a firm confidence that the Spirit of the Lord will pave the way for us. Only when it is of this cheerful and believing character has the Word its full urgency and true ring, so that it breaks through all obstructions. A person who had been all over the world once told me that he had scarcely ever fallen into the company of travellers with whom he was not able to converse

pleasantly, and, as he hoped, with lasting effect, about the journey to the heavenly country. I expressed my repugnance to conversation purposely introduced with a view to convert, and spoke of the danger of forestalling, instead of following in the footsteps of the Holy Spirit, of the snare of pride, and more of the same sort. He meekly answered: "I endeavoured never to *speak* until I was certain that I *loved*. I figured to myself, what we too often forget, that we men are all brothers one of another, and all belong to the same father's house, but are so easily turned aside from the path that leads to it. I thought of the words of Gellert—

> 'Perchance in heaven one day to me
> Some blessed saint will come and say,
> All hail! beloved, but for thee
> My soul to death had fallen a prey.
> And oh what rapture in the thought!
> One soul to glory to have brought.'

This never failed to soften and warm my heart; and when there was love in *mine*, I soon found a bridge into that of the stranger. It was as if the breath of God had drawn out a thread from the one and fastened it to the other."

This narrative I have never been able to forget. It is quite true, that if our speech be prompted by love, and that of a humble and unpretentious sort, discourse about conversion loses all that otherwise makes it offensive. In that case it has none of the haughty preceptorial tone which so often gives pain; no trace of intentional character, for love never calculates; and no taint of sour puritanical severity. *Such* discourse, as the apostle tells us, "will be *grateful*[1] to the hearers."[2] Admonitions are then no longer like darts and spears, but become like apples of gold upon dishes of silver.[3] In general, a great step has been gained with men of the world if we have only acquired the valuable art of speaking the truth mirthfully. We then knock at the door in sport, and it is opened to us in

[1] Eng. vers., "will minister grace." [2] Eph. iv. 29.
[3] Prov. xxv. 11.

earnest. Oh how precious a thing is wit, applied at the right time and place! A well-played ball never fails to find its pocket. What would I not give for a talent like that of Luther and Claudius, so as to be able always to season the word of truth with the salt of humour, according to the apostle's own expression,—"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man"![1] What would I not give to be able always to proclaim the Gospel with a cheerful countenance, bringing into view its consolatory and ennobling aspects, and communicating it as a *sweet* leaven of truth, which in another place the apostle calls it![2] There is a proverb which says that "with a single spoonful of honey you will catch more flies than with a whole cask of vinegar." Now it is very true that sharp vinegar is a large ingredient in the Word of God, but the Word likewise contains a large mixture of honey. There is in it much that, to one not wholly insensible, must have a pleasant taste the moment it touches his tongue. I greatly wish that I had charity enough always to serve up the honey first.

Another reason, and a main one, why we do not oftener boldly open our mouth to bear testimony is undoubtedly want of *faith*. We meet with persons of whom it is impossible to imagine that there can be any place in their heart open to discourse about the Cross. But Zinzindorf used to say that he always found it easy to converse with men of all descriptions, if he only looked upon them as *candidates*—he meant, candidates for the kingdom of heaven. To do this, however, requires great faith. If, for instance, we have to deal with those on whom, perchance, the best spiritual sharpshooters have for years been wasting their powder, and who were not softened and humbled, even when the hand of *God* was laid heavily upon them—in such a case, I repeat, it does require great faith to continue holding fast the persuasion that the cloudy morning and rainy noon may yet be succeeded by a bright and fair evening. And if we have not faith we become

[1] Col. iv. 6. [2] 1 Cor. v. 8.

faint-hearted while discoursing, and then indeed our words are only blunted arrows. If, however, we do really and firmly believe that there is a God who keeps His eye and heart open towards all the world, and that He "has no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but that all should come to repentance,"[1] we then, even when dealing with enemies of the truth, acquire a bold heart, and from it our words fly like arrows, fleet and sharp. And although the arrows may oft rebound, we must not on that account desist from our endeavours; for success depends *not merely* on the *temper* of the weapons, but also upon the *time* of the Lord. What we must do is to renew the attempt, recollecting the answer which the Lord gave to the question of Peter: "How oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him?"[2] which is here also applicable.

It is, however, just with those with whom we have every day to do that the attempt to convert with words is least of all necessary. Let us only be really trees laden with the goodly fruit that is the produce of faith, and the immediate effect will unquestionably be, that they who have not wholly sold their heart to darkness will conceive a certain reverence for the cause of the Gospel, and thereby be led *spontaneously to inquire* what sort of a root it is which bears fruit of so excellent a kind. The less urgent we are with our testimony,—the more they perceive that our own soul is our chief concern in the effort which we make,—the less able will they be to withhold their respect from it. I am thoroughly persuaded, and the persuasion has been confirmed by experience, that if we can succeed in planting in the minds of those by whom it is repudiated, the conviction that the Gospel has nothing extraordinary about it, and that it merely furnishes us with direction and power to become *what as men we ought to be*, we have thereby gained the heart of all whose ears are open to the voice of God. That, however, is a conviction which can be produced far less effectually by words than by deeds; and accordingly, since the days of my early and impure zeal went by, that is the object

[1] 2 Peter iii. 9. [2] Matt. xviii. 22.

to which all my prayers and all my wishes are directed; and I also find that in many a place doors are open to me for bearing a testimony for the Word.

No doubt the case is different with him who is the father of a family and the master of a household. He has received a distinct charge from God to build up his children and dependants spiritually, and to aim in his endeavours that they may become *a church in his house;* and as of that church he is the priest, it is incumbent upon him not only to testify, preach, and admonish wherever he observes anything that contravenes the divine will, but also to pray for and with the members. From time immemorial it has been regarded as the duty of a Christian father to assemble his family, morning and evening, in the presence of the Lord; and certainly this is a custom which the Lord has richly blessed. How excellent a spiritual discipline it is for the father himself! How he is humbled at night in the circle of his children and domestics, if in his intercourse with them during the day it has appeared that he had forgotten God and His commandments! How wholesome a restraint the fear of having to blush for transgressions before those against whom they were committed! Moreover, how beneficial to him the opportunity of testifying in his prayers, and while in the divine presence, that the fear of the Lord is the mainspring of his daily life, and that he is earnest and solicitous for the welfare of those who are dear to him, especially as all this is done in *the mood* and attitude in which his words are most likely to awaken confidence in their hearts! How great a comfort, too, to the members of the family, to have this way of looking into the heart of him into whose hand their lot has been mainly committed! and, in fine, how needful to them all such a means of maintaining the consciousness of what *for the Lord's sake* they owe to each other! In such circumstances the due discharge of the allotted task of the day becomes doubly easy. Verily, no duty is more urgent than to introduce afresh into every house the good old custom which the levity of the age has allowed to fall into disuse.

O Lord, with the whole earnestness of my heart I implore of Thee to help me first of all to be a true Christian in my own house and family. Teach me to testify; teach me *to keep silence*, as Thou wouldst have me do, so that on my account Thy name may never be profaned among those who do not know Thee.

Oh give my mind a childlike bent
To watch from hour to hour intent
The signals of Thine eye;
That all I think and all I do,
My speech, and even my silence too,
May with Thy will comply.

Yes, grant that my whole walk and ways
May be a sermon, and Thy praise
Without a pause bespeak;
And if great things Thou bidst me do,
Oh hide their lustre from my view,
And keep me calm and meek.

III.

Though soon the bright hues fade and die,
HOPE on sown fields can sheabes descry.

65.

It doth not yet appear what we shall be.

Would that my heart were pure,
I then the Lord would see;
And if I saw Him, sure,
My heart then pure would be.

What is the mean that knits
In harmony these twain;
Points from the earth to heaven,
From heaven to earth again?

It is the secret smart
To HOME-SICK *spirits known,*
That upwards lifts the heart
And brings the Saviour down.

1 JOHN, iii. 2, 3. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

ROM. viii. 22-24. "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?"

1 COR. xv. 25-28. "For He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be

destroyed is death. For He hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith, All things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted which did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."

1 Cor. xiii. 12. "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

BLESSED *are the home-sick, for they shall reach their Father's house!* was a saying frequently upon the lips of a man of God who had had rich experience of the pilgrim-life here below—its stony paths and stormy days and sleepless nights. But may not the man who treads the very pleasantest of the paths that lead through this terrestrial vale likewise take up the saying? Yes: so long as Christians need to pray that the *kingdom of God may come*—come into their own hearts and come into the world at large—they will never cease to long for the heavenly home. It is true that the coming of the kingdom of God is not an event altogether future. Even now it is come, although doubtless only in its rudiments, according to the language of the apostle, when he says, "We have received *the first-fruits of the Spirit.*" There is blessedness in the mere drops—how shall it be when the whole ocean flows in upon us! If the first-fruits already make us rich, shall we not be rich indeed when we reap the full harvest? The more he thus feels, the more natural in the life of the Christian will be a *longing after eternity.* For if, as the apostle says, "we are saved *by hope*," he who is destitute of such longing cannot possibly be a Christian at all. None perhaps ever received the first-fruits in more abundant measure than the apostle Paul, and yet he tells us how intensely he longed. He says: "We ourselves, also, which have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adop-

tion, to wit, the redemption of our body." And think not that this longing makes slothful hands or feeble knees; for after saying, "We are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord," he immediately subjoins, "*Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted by Him.*"[1] And while he affirms in one passage, "I die daily," he was able also to aver in another, "I have laboured more abundantly than they all." No; the longing for home does not make the hands slothful or the knees weary. Rather does every man who has a hope so bright and noble "purify himself, even as He is pure." And what else should the servant do who is advancing to meet a master like ours, but prepare to receive Him with due honour, according to His own words: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately."[2]

In this land of pilgrimage the path is often so rough as of itself to breed a yearning for the eternal home. And even were it otherwise, can we, so long as we are in the far country, ever become wholly free from *sin?* It is true that he who walks in the fear of the Lord advances from victory to victory; but is the victory over it ever *complete?* That certainly cannot be. St John, when probably in his eightieth or ninetieth year, was constrained to confess, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves."[3] St James must needs aver, "In many things we offend all."[4] And can any one still sojourning here, and still bearing about with him the earthly house of this tabernacle of clay, venture to anticipate that a day will ever come when he shall no longer need to pray, "*Forgive us our debts*"? Alas! were the kingdom of God to enter my heart in the fulness of its power, could I even then be blessed so long as I dwell in a world where Satan wields the sceptre over the

[1] 2 Cor. v. 8, 9.
[2] Luke, xii. 35, 36.
[3] 1 John, i. 8.
[4] James, iii. 2.

children of unbelief, and where, though that which is good possesses the right, the power belongs to that which is evil? No: I must account it carnal fulness when men venture to deny that a yearning for the land of light and truth is as natural to the Christian as yearning for the mountains is to one who has long lived upon the level plain and yet has a boding sense of the salubrity of mountain air.

Never without the deepest emotion do I read these words of John: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be." It is as if he wished to say, What man is there who would not even now feel himself blessed by the belief that God had already in His mercy adopted him as a child? And yet something greater than this has been promised; for "it hath not yet appeared what we *shall be.*" "When He shall appear," however, "we shall be like Him." This sets the human spirit at rest, for above or beyond it there can be nothing greater or better. Even at the time when He still concealed His heavenly glory beneath the woollen garb, even then it dawned upon our minds that in Him, or nowhere else, the noblest type of humanity was to be beheld. Now, however, the woollen garb of a servant has been laid aside—He has put on the kingly crown; and what *He*, the elder brother, is, that shall we also be. Beyond a doubt, therefore, there will arrive a time, long as it may still delay, when all within and about me shall be full of light. I adore, and am silent. How this shall be brought about I try in vain to conceive. I am told, however, that I shall see Him as He is. If, then, when translated into the other world, I take with me a love to Him exceeding all other loves, and if He, on His part, shall unveil Himself to me in the *fulness* of His beauty, will He not penetrate through me like the unrefracted sunbeam, and fill me with the light of which *He Himself* is full? "We shall see Him as He is," writes the beloved apostle; and as he wrote the words, how his heart must have thrilled with joy! Even at the time when his Saviour was still wearing the servile garb, John always felt it bliss to be permitted to lean

on His bosom, and experienced a sanctifying influence when he looked into His eye. Afterwards, when the Saviour had withdrawn from human sight, he found blessedness and sanctification in spiritual fellowship with Him, as he says: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, *that your joy may be full.*"[1] Now, however, John has the hope of seeing his Master again, and of seeing Him *as He is*—that is to say, undisguised and undisfigured—and that sight he knows will make him perfectly holy. Were one to understand the words in a carnal sense, well might he permit such a hope to slacken his efforts. The apostle is rather bowed down by it in spirit, for he is sensible that it is all *mercy*. It only makes him more humble, and more earnest in seeking to please Him. "Every man," he says, "that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

We are now the children of God in *faith;* we believe that of His mercy He has accepted us, and therefore we feel the beginnings of a filial affection to Him. In truth, however, we shall only then be His children when we resemble the First-begotten, who is His veritable Son. And this, methinks, is the reason why Paul likewise says that we groan and wait for the adoption, as if it were not already a present good, and represents it as consequent upon the redemption of the body; looking forward to the time when, the first-fruits being reaped, the full harvest of the Spirit shall have come, and this poor and mortal frame, now so often reluctant when the soul would soar aloft, shall likewise participate in the life of glory. For then there shall be nothing about us to prevent the light eternal from freely permeating our material part, and expelling from it all darkness and infirmity. "Our conversation," saith the apostle, "is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fash-

[1] 1 John, i. 3, 4.

ioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."[1]

We need not wonder that to many these great promises appear but as beautiful dreams. He that looks upon his own weakness, or considers what has been going on upon the earth since the beginning of the world, or who reflects how slowly and imperceptibly Christ is formed in the heart, may well doubt whether it will ever be that His enemies shall all lie prostrate at His feet. The apostle Peter tells us that in his days there were scoffers who said, "Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."[2] But, God be thanked! we build this hope of ours neither on what our eyes see, nor yet on the thoughts of our own erring minds; for we know that

> We perish, if in our own might
> To wage the war we try;
> But One ordained for us to fight
> Can all our foes defy.
> And if you ask me, Who is this?
> I answer, *Christ* our champion is.

He fights and, says the apostle, reigns until He has put all enemies under His feet; and by mentioning death as the last of these, he comprises under them all the things that still hinder the image of God in human nature from acquiring the mastery over what is hostile and obstructive. And when the battle has been fought out, and all things have been subdued unto Him, then will He demit His regal office, in order that He alone, in whose behalf His wars were waged, may become all in all. Who can measure what these words express? it is an ocean without a shore: "He will be all in *me*, and He will be all in *all*."

> Lord, in the ocean of Thy love
> Be all my rebel passions drowned;
> And not a wish Thy frown to move
> In my regenerate heart be found.

[1] Philip. iii. 20, 21. [2] 2 Peter, iii. 4.

Let every pulse throb thanks to Thee,
And every breath an anthem be!

Oh let my eye, wherever bent,
In all things see Thy glory shine;
My ear in every day's event
Discern a harmony divine;
And may I feel that, far and near,
Where'er I am, Thou, God, art here.

Such was our song in the days of our infirmity here below; but when God shall be all in all, will not what we once sang have become reality? There have been reflective Christians who, in lofty flights of the spirit, have told us what they thought of that plenitude of graces which is to be poured out upon us at the time of the full harvest. But this I venture not to do, because holy Scripture itself speaks upon the subject only in emblems, and thereby gives us to understand that the things are of a kind of which the mind may perchance have a boding sense, but which it cannot comprehend, and on which it scarcely dares to think. When it calls Him who is "the brightness of the Father's glory," our "elder brother"—when it promises that we shall be like Him,—do I rightly understand what this signifies? When it promises that there will no longer be any difference between my knowledge and His knowledge, or between what I am, and what He is, able to do, does it mean that He will reserve *nothing* for Himself? This is certainly the prospect which the Scriptures always present afresh, and from some new point of view, to the child of God, and from the magnitude of which he recoils. When, as their great High-priest, He prays for His disciples, and says, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am; *that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me.*" And "*the glory which Thou hast given me, I have given them;* that they may be one, even as we are one."[1]—When He says, "To him that overcometh will I grant *to sit with me on my throne*, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne."[2]—When the apostle

[1] John, xvii. 22, 24. [2] Rev. iii. 21.

avers, "*Then shall I know* (*God*) *even as also I am known* (*of Him*)."—I scarcely dare to utter the words, and yet I cannot be mistaken as to their meaning. Do they not tell us that we shall be made to resemble the Son of God in all respects? Is it not a fellowship in *everything* which He, the First-born, promises to those whom He purposes to exalt to sonship with Himself? And yet if He did not shrink from the deep abasement of assuming human flesh and blood, and entering into fellowship with us in our abject state, surely we need not wonder that it is now His good pleasure to make us partakers of all His greatness. I might even say we can look for nothing else. Oh what a noble text is that which tells us that "both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee"![1] He has dignified poor human nature, and given to it what He received from the Father, and has thereby made us sons of equal rank with Himself—yet all through *grace*, and grace alone. For that reason it is that He will remain the *Head* through all eternity. No doubt we shall be like Him, yet on that very account we shall owe Him, and Him alone, a debt of gratitude. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich."[2] For this, therefore, we shall through all eternity give thanks unto Him, the Prince of life, who has gone before us on the path of suffering, in order to bring many sons unto glory.[3] When permitted to sit beside Him on the throne on which He has been set by the Father, we shall never cease to sing the hymn, "Worthy is *the Lamb that was slain* to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."[4]

In every body where there is a head there must also be diversity among the members. Although, therefore, it might

[1] Heb. ii. 11, 12.
[2] 2 Cor. viii. 9.
[3] Heb. ii. 10.
[4] Rev. v. 12.

seem at first as if, when God is all in all, no one of these could differ from another, in reality this is not the case; for just as the *Prince* of life travelled to glory by a path of His own, so likewise must the sons whom He purposes to conduct to glory with Him. And it is a path which none of them can forget. They have been trained in different schools, and have entered the sanctuary by different doors. There is, in fact, an eternal centre of spirits emitting innumerable rays, and on some particular one of these does every spirit reach that centre. For this reason, when congregated there, they shall all take part in the same halleluiah, and yet each with a voice and tone peculiar to himself.

Almighty God, in whose hand it is to acquit or to condemn, I cannot but acknowledge Thy full and perfect right to condemn me; and yet Thou hast awarded me an inheritance so great that I scarcely dare for very shame to lift my eyes towards it. I should praise and thank Thee through eternity, even though the place allotted me were on the remotest confine of Thy holy land, or only at the threshold of Thy heavenly temple. But Thy Word distinctly tells me that Thou wilt draw me to Thy heart, that Thou wilt seat me on Thy throne, and make me a copy of the brightness of Thy glory. Oh give me faith sufficiently great and powerful to grasp so inconceivable a promise; and in seasons of weakness vouchsafe to me a glimpse, though it be but into the outward porch, of that glorious place to which I shall one day be exalted. At such a thought how does this little earth, with all its mighty woe, recede far, far behind me!

Here dwell for ever joy and light.
The soul is clad in raiment bright
 Of spotless purity.
Like kings we sit on thrones, and wear
Immortal chaplets, fresh and fair,
 While changeless time rolls by.
Oh happy they that day who see,
When *all and in all God shall be!*

66.

I saw a new Heaven and a new Earth.

Earth was for thee too strait, impatient throbbed thy heart;
Now thou hast room enough, for now with God thou art.
Yes, room which to explore, if thou shouldst enterprise,
Time and eternity itself will not suffice.

Rev. xxi. 1. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."

ANOTHER of the apostles writes: "The fashion of this world passeth away."[1] The old earth will pass away in order to give place to the new, which shall continue for ever. How much of the old will remain we do not know, and can only conjecture. It is, however, certain that beneath its outward rind a resurrection germ is contained, just as there is in our earthly body. The fleshly mass, which by the afflux and deflux of its particles is undergoing continual change, does not constitute the body's real substance. There is within a spiritual type and germ, which finds it hard to spring and shoot forth as it ought through the coarse outward crust formed of the *dust* of the ground.[2] Even the erect stature of the human body plainly shows that its inhabitant is of a different rank from those who inhabit other bodies. But how strait and coarse is this crust in which he is confined! We see revealed in the wondrous fabric called the eye the tremblings of the slenderest string which is touched in the recesses of the breast. How would it be were every member of the body such a mirror of the soul as the eye at present is?

And now we learn that there is to be a resurrection. Yes; and this resurrection the spiritual germ in my body, which already labours to shoot forth into view, will undergo. It will

[1] 1 Cor. vii. 31. [2] Gen. ii. 7.

rise again in the elements of a new world. And does not every creature in this fleeting world bear within it a similar resurrection germ? Certain it is that the place which is destined for our abode will in some measure be congenial in nature and properties with the beings who are to inhabit it. Now it is written of man when risen from the grave, that "that body is not first which is spiritual, but that which is *natural;* and after it the *spiritual.*" [1] And consequently, as our body is to be *spiritualised*, the place of our abode will also require to possess spiritual properties. At present body and spirit are subject to different laws; for whereas the spirit aspires to heaven, the body tends to earth, even in the case of those whom the Spirit, who quickens us in Christ Jesus, has already made free from the law of sin and of death. On which account it is said, "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of (indwelling) sin; but the Spirit is (already) life because of righteousness." [2] But all this is to be changed. The body itself is to take on a spiritual nature and quality, and then the spirit's ray will shoot through it unbroken and unimpeded, and it will with ease and freedom obey the spirit's laws. The body of nature shall become man's, and over it he shall have dominion as if it were a second body. But "now we see through a glass, darkly."

Verses 2 and 3. "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God."

A *city* of God shall come down from heaven to earth. All they who from the beginning have been congregated into a Church, and whom, with the Lord Jesus, "the heavens have

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 46.

[2] That is, by reason of the righteousness that already reigns in it. Rom. viii. 10.

received until the times of the restitution of all things, which God has spoken of by the mouth of His holy prophets since the world began"[1]—they all shall come down to the new earth, and shall there constitute the people of God. The foundation of a Church of saints was laid by the Lord as early as the time when He said to Israel, "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation."[2] In that Church of the redeemed He ordained for Himself a spiritual priesthood, saying to them, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light."[3] What was the Church of God's children, in its feeble rudiments here upon earth, and when still vexed with mighty conflicts within and without, will hereafter be the Church made perfect, and free from all conflict for ever. It will be a bride adorned for her husband. While here upon earth the body "grew up into Him, which is the head;"[4] there we shall all be "a perfect man, in the measure of the full stature of Christ."[5] No doubt we are already "espoused"[6] to Him, in order that, as beseems the betrothed wife, we may live to please Him and Him alone, though, alas! we are too much given to the courtship of other men. Then we shall be a bride adorned by God Himself, and shall know no other love but the love of Christ our Head.

Who can worthily figure to himself the blessedness of the day when, freed from every error and stain, they who in the preparatory school of earth were trained for the perfect kingdom of Christ shall meet together, and when the life which, while they lived here below, was hidden with Christ in God,[7] shall with Christ be manifested in glory? "Embodiment," according to the saying of a profound and pious man, "is the end of the ways of God." He means that that which is internal reaches its perfection only when it becomes also external, and reveals and manifests itself outwardly. Thus it is

[1] Acts, iii. 21. [2] Exod. xix. 6. [3] 1 Pet. ii. 9. [4] Eph. iv. 15.
[5] Eph. iv. 13. [6] 2 Cor. xi. 2. [7] Col. iii. 3.

that the spiritual light, when it fills the whole capacity of his heart, breaks out even in a man's bodily frame. His eye beams forth the peace that is within him, and his face begins to shine like the face of an angel, as we are told was the case with Stephen.[1] For the present, indeed, the inner life of holy men is hidden in the inmost depths of their soul, and painfully looks through the gross material of the body, which so reluctantly obeys the law of the spirit. A day, however, is coming when that inner life shall be revealed, and through a light and heavenly vesture shine forth and reign; so that in this sense, also, embodiment shall be the end of the ways of God. Even now we have felt so happy when tasting the sweets of brotherly love, although brotherly love is so defective here below, and although the taste of it is often embittered by sin and interrupted by the world, which always interferes when the children of God seek to unite in a bond of brotherhood with Christ. What will be the case when all that is inward shall have become outward, and when sin shall no more be able to mar, nor the enmity of the world to interrupt, the fruition of affection? How great and noble and heart-refreshing the gifts which have been conferred upon the Church, even in this the period of her servitude and sojourn on earth! Pass in review all the ornaments which she has worn from the beginning until now, and oh what an endless variety of blossoms and hues and perfumes are displayed, although she ever wore a servile garb, and the weather was often so inclement! What shall it be when the eternal spring has come, when they who are servants shall be lords, and when the gifts glorified by faith shall be free to reign and show what they are? Yes; then, indeed, will the tabernacle of God be with men, and it will be manifest, even to the sight, that He dwells among them.

Bright beam the inward gems of grace
Through the mean garb they wear below,
And to the saints of every race
Their kinsmen in a moment show.

[1] Acts, vi. 15.

But oh! the splendour of the sight,
When open to the general gaze,
These gems in the unclouded light
Of the new heaven and earth shall blaze.
Is not the antepast of this
Itself immeasurable bliss?

How immeasurable this bliss shall be may be inferred from the fact that *the Lord Himself* expressed a longing after it. He, the Head, even when on earth, yearned for fellowship with His disciples, though for certain they had little to give Him, and yearned still more for it when it should be perfected in heaven. Hear what He said at the last supper to His disciples: "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled[1] in the kingdom of God. And I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come."[2] It thus appears that even such imperfect fellowship as could be enjoyed with His disciples here below was grateful to the Head—nay, more, that it directed His view forward to the time of consummation, and suggested the thought, Oh how great the blessedness of that will be! And if the Head thus sighed for the perfected communion with the members, shall not the *members* sigh for the perfected communion with each other and with Him?

Verse 4. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Here below we walk from day to day amid tears and want, and death and sorrow and pain, and it might well appear as if human life could not exist without this bitter accompaniment; and yet every one feels in his inmost heart that it can-

[1] That is, shall be enjoyed in a more perfect manner.
[2] Luke, xxii. 15-18.

not and will not be thus for ever. But if the Word of God did not attest the fact, we could not venture to trust solely to the voice of the heart, for are not our hopes often the mere offspring of our *wishes?* Now, however, we know it. A day will come on which, by all to whom grace has been given to believe in the Son of God, the toils and tears of the past shall be remembered no more. Up then, disconsolate hearts! whatever may be the burden which at present weighs you down. Look forward to the future, in which all sufferings shall be as if submerged in a mighty ocean. "Former things are passed away," says the voice of the prophet. The whole period of the world's history to which affliction and sorrow belonged shall lie behind us like a morning dream, and no remnant of it be left but that "peaceable fruit of righteousness"[1] which is the growth of correction.

Whether there shall then be absolutely no kind of *sorrow* at all; whether not even *sadness* nor *longing*—those tenderest buds upon the tree of pain—shall still be left; whether there shall be no remoter goal to be reached, and consequently no aching of desire after it; whether there shall not even be the remembrance of the path of sin and sorrow through which we have made our way to the land of freedom; and whether, if there be no remembrance, there will also be no sense of *sadness* as the residue of it,—these and similar questions emerge in the heart when with the eye of hope we look across from the land of pilgrimage. It is my opinion that every kind of sorrow, even that of sadness and of longing, shall have passed away.

No doubt we shall never forget the path that led us through the sins and tears of earth. How can we possibly forget it, seeing that it is likewise a path through a sea of *mercies?* But, then, will not the retrospect of it *sadden* our hearts, inasmuch as there must always remain a certain discord, never to be perfectly harmonised, between the path we actually travelled

[1] Heb. xii. 11.

and some other one which we would have preferred? No; I am of opinion that as the child of God, even here on earth, when stretched upon a bed of languishing, and conflicting with the pangs of dissolution, is privileged to exclaim in faith and with unmingled joy, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" and to avouch that "the Lord hath done all things well," much more shall we be entitled to utter this exclamation, when we *behold* the victory, not by faith merely, but actually realised. Yes; when in the light eternal, and from the throne on which the heavenly Father has vouchsafed a seat with Christ to those who with Christ have fought and conquered, we shall survey from end to end the path we have traversed, we shall doubtless exclaim, "*He hath done all things well.*" To ourselves, indeed, we shall have to confess that as we journeyed along we did many things that were not well done; but yet the conviction that where sin abounded grace did much more abound, and that all things were done transcendently well by Him, will stifle every wish that we had gone another way than the one we actually travelled. If there remain any trace of the sadness which affects us here, when as yet we see not the consummation, it can be nothing but the *humility* with which we shall laud and praise Him through all eternity.

As for the aching of *desire*, how can there be room for either want or wish where God is all in all? When the prayer shall be perfectly fulfilled which the Saviour once offered for His Church, saying, "The glory which Thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me"—when all shall be conformed to the image of the first-born Son, what can they still lack, or what more can they possibly desire? They shall see God, the all-perfect good; and beyond that, for what else can the heart yearn? "His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads.

And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever."[1] Such is the *rest* that "remaineth for the people of God; for he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works."[2] Doubtless this is not the rest of the *grave*, for that is death. It is a quiet *Sabbatic* rest, in which the true action of the soul will commence. Neither will there be movement from darkness to light, for that is necessarily accompanied by disquiet and the pain of desire; but there will be movement *in* the light. When there is difference, then there is also motion. *We* are not to be absorbed in Him, rather is He to be an object *of sight* to us. And will not this vision be action? Yes, the very purest and noblest exercise of the soul's faculties. Whoever in this land of faith has learned what it is to see with faith's eye—whoever can tell of hours in which that eye gazed unaverted on the supreme good, and was never satiated, will be able to testify that there is indeed a rest in God, which is the soul's highest and purest action. There are persons who inquire if the blessedness of this best of all enjoyments may not possibly satiate; but it may be questioned whether such persons have ever here on earth experimentally known what it is for the soul to see God in faith, and to find rest in Him. A great man[3] has said: "If the eternal Father were to hold *truth* in His right hand, and the *endeavour* after it in His left, and were to bid me choose between the two, I would clasp His knees and say, Father, the *left*." But can it be that there is not more of *life* than of *death* in the light, and that it is given to us to find life only between day and night? No, indeed; it is in the light that the soul finds its proper element—that element in which it can stir and move and unfold its wings. You fear the monotony of the life eternal, and justly might you fear it if it arose from the sameness of a good of which, as it could not fill the capacity of the soul, the soul might become weary, and long for some other. But could the soul become

[1] Rev. xxii. 3-5. [2] Heb. iv. 10. [3] Lessing.

weary, or think the time long, if the sameness were that of a good which *comprehends all other goods, and so fills the soul that it can hold no more?* Who has not experienced that, while we are viewing and enjoying an object which wholly engrosses the faculties, time rather takes to itself wings and contracts into the ecstasy of a single moment? Is it possible that when all barriers are removed, and all change ceases, there can be such a thing as time at all? In the plenitude of vision and fruition it must vanish away. Have you never heard the story of Peter Probewell, the monk?[1]—

Forth from his cell, at break of day,
A pious monk once bent his way.
Probewell his name, his curious mind
To search into deep things inclined.
The vernal air, the morning sun,
And babbling streamlet cheer him on.
He seeks the quiet of the wood,
And muses thus in pensive mood:
"How rapidly the seasons fly,
Like shifting scenes before the eye!
Scarce has the spring with artist hand
Beset with gems the verdant land,
When summer's horn of plenty pours
Her endless wealth of fruits and flowers;
Then autumn comes, with mirth and smiles,
To hang her clusters on the hills;
And while we still admire and gaze,
Winter with silver all o'erlays.
If, then, it please Thy love to dress
With such a changeful loveliness
This earth of ours, what shall it be,
O Lord, when we Thy face shall see?
No doubt, above what tongue can tell,
That shall all other joys excel;
But if no change or pause it know,
While countless ages come and go,
Will not the spirit weary grow?
Lord, in Thy pity deign to hear
My prayer, and make this mystery clear."

As on he plods, with labouring mind,
The beeches and the firs behind

[1] After Schubert's prose narrative.

Recede, and soon his wondering eyes
See palms and cedars round him rise.
Startled, he turns to leave the place,
And home his footsteps to retrace;
When, wafted from a neighbouring tree,
There comes a charming melody,
So ravishingly soft and clear,
His heart the while stood still to hear.
It was a bird of paradise
Which sang of the predestined bliss,
When the great day at last shall come
And break the slumber of the tomb:
How heavenly dew, in golden showers,
Shall bathe this barren world of ours;
How all things clad in fresh array
Shall cast their servile bonds away;
How freedom's shout and trumpet's blare
Shall echo through the boundless air,
And angels, rapt in glad amaze,
On the regenerate world shall gaze.
So ran the entrancing melody
The while the monk stood listening by;
Then turned to go, but, grateful, paid
His debt of thanks, and, parting, said:
"Sweet bird, to hear thy heavenly strain
To-morrow I will come again."

As home in raptured mood he hies,
His way through palms and cedars lies,
Till, near the abbey's fair domain,
The oaks and firs appear again;
Murmurs the stream; the fields look gay,
As seen before at break of day;
Only the house seemed somewhat strange,
Although he scarce could tell the change.
He steps into the porch, and there
A monk, with cold and distant air,
Accosts him: "Sir, your will make known.
You seem to think this house your own?"
Straight he replies: "Why this to me?
I'm brother Probewell, as you see."
"Probewell!" the monk affrighted cries;
"O ghastly sight to meet my eyes!
A thousand years ago and more
That name one of our brethren bore;
But legends old of him relate
He met with a mysterious fate;

For, wandering in the wood one day,
He disappeared—*how*, none could say."

Poor Probewell heaves a sigh profound,
Casts a bewildered look around—
Anon to heaven uplifts his gaze,
And thus in humble accents prays:
"O Lord, at last, with shame, I own
How far astray Thy child had gone.
So slow of heart I was, and blind,
That painful doubts assailed my mind,
If when at last Thy face we see
In heavenly bliss perpetually,
The soul will be contented quite
With the long beatific sight,
And never, never weary grow
While countless ages come and go;
And, lo! from Paradise a bird,
By Thee commissioned, has appeared,
Which sang of the new heaven and earth
To rise at nature's second birth,
And merely with its charming lay
So stole my ravished heart away
As made a thousand years fly past
And seem scarce one short hour to last.
Oh! how then shall it be when breaks
That morn which all the dead awakes,
When I shall see Thy glory shine
Unveiled, and merge my heart in thine?
What sense have they of time's swift flight
Who in the one chief good delight?
And even eternity is nought
To those who see the face of God."

Verses 5 and 6. "And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And He said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."

"*I make all things new*," spake He that sat upon the throne, and who calls Himself the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. Is there not in this very name an intimation that

He who bears it forethought and foresaw, even at the first beginning, what was to be the end? Must not a being to whose eye time and space interpose no barriers, live now and evermore in view of what shall eternally be? As for time, what is it but a little *fragment* of eternity—a few drops in that infinite ocean! Accordingly, the things which God makes new are all the while in His sight likewise the things which were old; and it is only to *us*, who are ourselves made new, and who grow and ripen *in* time and *with* time, that the marvels of his eternity will be new. In that eternity my spirit also, withdrawn from time, desires to live. Above the dark floating clouds there is a blue heaven which is never shaken, and never changes. On the lofty summits which the sounds of earth do not reach, reigns everlasting calm. Oh that in that calm my spirit could be merged, and there find rest and peace! It is a drama of bitter tears which the fallen race of men are performing here on earth, and shall perform until the day of redemption. In their sorrows and conflicts I must needs take a part, but I do it with the undoubting presentiment of an endless victory. "These words are true and faithful," so spake the lips of truth; and even though here on earth hell were to celebrate far greater triumphs than she actually does, her temporary victory but leads to her everlasting overthrow.

Soon all my sorrows shall I lay
Down in the silent tomb—
Glory shall be my bright *array*,
The father's house my *home*.
Angels shall my *companions* be,
My only *feeling* joy;
And God to laud and magnify
For ever my *employ*.

67.

The Creature shall be delivered from the Bondage of Corruption.

Why quivers and flashes the flame as it glows?
Why murmurs incessant the stream as it flows?
Forth rushes the tempest with furious bound,
While the old world in silence wheels round and round;
O elements, why do ye travail and strain?
Aspire ye some goal everlasting to gain?
What ails thee, O Nature? bespeaks the unrest
Through all thy wide realm some deep woe in thy breast?
Yes, sadly she mourns; for, alas! in a day
The form and the hue of her offspring decay,
Although she so fondly would see them arrayed
With beauty and youth that were never to fade.
Yet, Nature, fight on, and bewail not the doom
Of thy children—they die but to RISE FROM THE TOMB.
AND THE DAY THAT REDEEMS FROM HIS BONDAGE THY LORD,
SHALL SEE THEE TO FREEDOM AND GLORY RESTORED.

ROM. xi. 36. "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

ROM. viii. 21-23. "Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

WHAT a spectacle the creation presents when I figure to myself these words, "*Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things*," inscribed upon every object! Solitary and wan they stand, if we imagine their connection with God done away; but how do they all begin to glow, as it were,

with many-coloured flame, when we imagine this connection restored! Even when I think of any object as being a creature of God, how the conception gives it brightness and colour! "Everything," says Luther, "which the word of God has created, is a little vocable from His grammar, by which He discloses His hidden nature."

Of Him are all things. It is true that the apostle is here speaking principally of men, but yet what he says is really true of all things. They are, as it were, so many single letters of that word of power which called the world out of nothing; and although they be not the reflection of God's *countenance* (for that He has withheld from man), they are yet the imprint of *His footsteps*. Of the material world the apostle affirms, that "the invisible things of Him, even His eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made"[1]—that is, by the creation of the world. And the Book of Wisdom says, that if the heathen, "being delighted by the beauty (of the works of nature), took them to be gods, they ought to have known how much better the Lord of them is; for the first Author of beauty hath created them. But if they were astonished at their power and virtue, they ought to have understood by them how much mightier is He that made them. For by the greatness and beauty of the creatures, proportionably the Maker of them is seen."[2] If it were not the *breath of the Almighty* which bears up the eagle in the air, and paints the cheek of the rose, and on the earth gives impetus to the waters of the roaring flood, and in the firmament wings to the swiftly flying clouds, according to the description of the Psalmist, "Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created; and Thou renewest the face of the earth;"[3] if the universe were nothing but a piece of dead carpentry, a lifeless picture, and if the Eternal were not present in every corner of creation, —how could man possibly feel the consciousness, which in the bosom of nature he does feel, that he is near to and intimate with his God, so as often to think that he might speak to Him,

[1] Rom. i. 20. [2] Wis. of Sol. xiii. 3-5. [3] Psalm civ. 30.

and could not but hear His voice resounding from the hills and valleys? If the Architect do not still linger behind in His edifice, so that He can make us feel His breath, whence comes the fondness with which we cling to the works of nature, and experience from them a rapture which, for hours and days at least, cools the wounds and soothes the aching of our hearts? No doubt philosophers would persuade me that my own heart is the book in which I read the grandeur and beauty which I behold in the material world; but if it were so, why does not the writing within me quicken of itself? why do I not see it until I have looked upon the creation without? Must it not be in that outward creation that the grandeur and beauty reside, although, perchance, under restraint, seeing that only when I gaze upon the outward creation the thought of its grandeur and beauty emerges in my soul? Yes, doubtless, here also there is holy land—here also a habitation of God.

"I have seen
A curious child, who dwelt upon a tract
Of inland ground, applying to his ear
The convolutions of a smooth-lipped shell,
To which, in silence hushed, his very soul
Listened intently, and his countenance soon
Brightened with joy, for, murmuring from within,
Were heard sonorous cadences, whereby,
To his belief, the monitor expressed
Mysterious union with its native sea.[1]

Yes,—

The universe is but a shell, in whose
Deep bosom traces of its birth repose.
You gaze on it with rapture, and yet why
Is it so silent? *Gaze* not, but apply
To the twin-parted lips an eager ear,
And pause the murmured harmony to hear,
Which, like a solemn echo, seems to sound
From the far home in which it being found,
And intimates of life the ocean vast
From whence it came, to which returns at last.

Through Him are all things. The word which He uttered

[1] Wordsworth.

on the morning of creation has never ceased to sound. As it called all things into being, so does it likewise uphold all things now and for evermore. This the apostle tells us in the words,—"Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, *upholdeth all things by the word of His power:*"[1] and this Christ Himself avers when He says, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."[2] Sweet and fresh are waters at their source; but when they have flowed, or remained at rest awhile, they become tepid and bitter. But, like water direct from the fountain, the stream of life which runs through all created things, now and for ever flows and rushes as sweet and fresh as on the day of their creation. Such are my thoughts when I stand upon mountain-tops, and beneath me, from their feet to their snowy summits, find life in the grasses, in the soft rustling of the woods, in the crash of the avalanche, the gushing fountains, and the clouds that career above my head; and still more when I again descend among the green corn-fields and the streams that surge in the valleys. Enraptured, I then exclaim, Yes! it is His word of power that now sustains all things, as it did on the day they were made.

From the world of men and its destructive forces, its conflicts and sins, I fly for refuge into the tranquil Sabbath of nature. And yet is there really a *perfect* Sabbath here? Have war and destruction met with bounds which they cannot pass? Is this *solely* a land of untroubled peace? Single hours of rapture and solacement, like those enjoyed in nature, are occasionally met with even in the world of men. But are the vanity and strife and ruin which in that world wound the heart —are these altogether unknown to nature? No, indeed. For as she contains within her the image of all that is ennobling and delightful in humanity, does it not seem, on the other hand, as if we had smitten her with our distemper? Is it only in the human breast, and not also in the bowels of the earth, that destruction rages? Does the baneful poison prey on

[1] Heb. i. 3. [2] John, v. 17.

none but the children of men? Has it not spread into the animal and vegetable worlds; nay, even penetrated into the mineral kingdom far down in subterranean depths? What vice is there which has not its counterpart among the lower animals? Of what single product of nature can we truly affirm that it is in all respects a successful and complete and perfect specimen of creative power? Are there many of her special works which are not susceptible of improvement by human art, and which the human intellect cannot beautify and strip of innate faults and blemishes? I read an acknowledgment to this effect from the pen of philosophers who are not known to have ever felt the yearning of God's children for a lost paradise. "There is none—not even the most beautiful of her creations —that is free from a certain discord," says one of the masters of natural science.[1] Oh no! If the burdened spirit of man does at times draw breath afresh in the bosom of nature, even nature does not at *every* hour, at *every* place, and in *every* single production, offer what can give him contentment.

> The earth is fair enough to be for heaven a *waiting*-place,
> Not from the heart the blessed hope of heaven to efface.

Do we not, at the very outset of history, and immediately after the Fall, read the words: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life: thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field"?[2] Do we not learn that man, when fallen, was forced to turn his back upon paradise? Are not these thorns and thistles only one of the links in the chain of the baneful forces which manifest themselves through the whole domain of nature, beautiful although she be? And may not a confirmation of that primeval sentence, which came from the mouth of God, be found in the passage where our Lord calls these baneful forces the *power or army* of Satan, who is the great "enemy of mankind"? "I beheld," were His words, "Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give

[1] G. Forster. [2] Gen. iii. 17, 18.

unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy."[1] And is it not to this that the prophet refers, when in figurative language he foretells that a branch from the root of David shall bear fruit? "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots: and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."[2]

Alas! that upon an earth overgrown with thorns and thistles the fallen children of Adam can so easily forget heaven, and cease to long for it. What would they have done upon an earth on which there were no thorns or thistles at all? Was it not well that their punishment should at the same time be of the nature of a cure? And if it was on man's account that the creature was made subject unto vanity—as the language of the apostle, "*not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same,*" clearly intimates—who but must involuntarily

[1] Luke, x. 18, 19. [2] Isa. xi. 1-9.

subjoin, like the apostle, that this has been done "*in hope*"?[1] And if that be true, then does the future reserve for nature, no less than for man, a resurrection morn on which she will put on her festive robes.

To Him are all things. This also the hopeful soul may venture to utter with reference to the whole creation. It waits, as the apostle says, and even with *earnest expectation*, for the *manifestation of the sons of God*, being ordained to participate in their "glorious liberty," and to be then delivered from the "bondage of corruption." Within *us*, as we know, there lies a resurrection germ, which, though for the present restrained, shall on the day of our emancipation spring up, fostered by the vernal sun of the life everlasting. And in nature also a similar germ lies hid. The earth is, so to speak, the nurse of a king's son, who, when the babe was cast out, had to submit to be cast out along with him. But the babe shall one day inherit his father's throne, and then shall the earth also be exalted with him to glory.

> Fair art thou, earth, clad in thy bright array!
> And when thy radiant beauty I survey,
> Enraptured I exclaim, Yes, thou art fair!

Such is the exclamation which even now from the mountain heights I shout down into the echoing valleys, and my heart palpitates. But my heart can scarcely hold its emotion when I anticipate the day on which, free from all error and sin, I shall shout it into a new and glorified world.

It is true that the new heart, when emancipated from sin and error, sees nature in a fairer light than before. So that there was a certain measure of truth in the doctrine, that nature's glorification will consist in nothing but the glorification of *our sense of sight*, when all tears shall have been wiped from our eyes, and all burdens lifted from our hearts. From certain passages of his writings, this seems to have been the opinion of Luther. He says: "When we are in a cheerful mood, a little tree, or even a beautiful flower or shrub, gives

[1] Rom. viii. 20.

us delight; but when we are sorrowful we do not care to look at them. Heaven and earth shall be made new, and we believers shall become one flock." It is also related of him, that being in company with some friends, after jesting for a while with each other, they came at last to speak upon serious subjects, such as the life eternal, and how the heaven and earth shall be made new, and how Adam and Eve fell out of paradise —that is, lost the grace and favour of God; but that we shall all have a second and eternal life in the world to come. There shall then, he said, "be a new heaven and a new earth; the flowers, and leaves, and grass shall be as beautiful and charming as emeralds, and all creation lovely in the highest degree. Let us only have the grace of God, and then the creatures smile upon us. Were I to command a flint to become a precious stone, it would be so from that hour. In the new heavens a delectable light will for ever shine. What we now would fondly wish to be, that shall we then become, and where the thoughts are, there will also be the body."

And there can be no doubt that when, with hearts made perfectly free, we can smile into the face of nature, nature too will reflect back our smile with a loveliness far surpassing what we now behold. But neither what the apostle says about the deliverance of the creature *from the service of vanity*, nor the predictions of the prophet, nor the words of Jesus Christ, admit of such an interpretation. I am rather of opinion that the hostile and destructive forces in the domain of nature are not mere reflections from our beclouded eyes, but that the material creation is really destined to share in the liberty one day to be conferred upon the children of God.

Thou God of mercy, who can tell all the delectation and grace which Thou hast in reserve for us Thine undeserving creatures! Would we but reflect upon it, and grasp it with a strong and unwavering hope; would we but live our life here below continually looking up to those blessed things and that ineffable inheritance into which, to our astonishment, Thou wilt one day admit us on reaching the land of

freedom, how worthless would appear all the baits with which the fleeting pleasures of the world entice us! The consciousness of our utter unworthiness of such displays of favour and compassion would check the very first motions of sin. At every retrospect of the past we are bowed down by the countless memorials of Thy mercy. Yet, for all that, we have before us a whole eternity in which Thy mercy shall be still more largely unfolded to us. Happy the man who can embrace these things with a strong and lively hope, and being here on earth already saved, serves Thee, Thou God of love ineffable, with simplicity of heart!

A day will dawn when from on high,
 Heaven shall come down to dwell on earth;
And then shall through creation fly
 Once more the word that gave it birth.

Full many a noble germ now hid
 Deep in our breasts as in a tomb,
Waits the new "*Let there be*" to bid
 It wake to life, and bud and bloom.

Yes,—even the elements that day,
 When freedom's shout rings through the air,
Shall shake the dust of earth away,
 And as at first grow young and fair.

As through the crystal, warm and bright,
 Pierces the sun's meridian beam,
So through all creatures whom His might
 Has made, the breath of God shall stream.

IV.

The Circle of Human Life.

Oh who will teach me, ere it fleets away,
To make the most of life's brief winter day?—
Behold, the Church extends the hand of grace,
To help the pilgrim entering on the race,
And ere the threatening storms obscure the sky,
Yields him a refuge in her sanctuary.
That hand he holds until, in strength increased,
The Master calls him to the holy feast;
Where the new man receives congenial food,
As died the old in the baptismal flood.
Thus trained by home and Church to meet the strife,
In manhood's strength he takes the field of Life;
And first the wide and various scene explored,
Selects some spot on which to serve the Lord.
Next, that the hours of toil may sweetly glide,
He calls the gentle helpmate to his side;
And labours on, till, old and weary grown,
Kind death approaching mows the veteran down.
Then meet the mourners round his silent grave,
And God adore for the dear friend He gave.

68.

New-Year's Day.

The world is slippery, walk with heed—
Points GOD *the way, there show thy speed.*

Fortune is round and foils the hand—
Built on GOD'S *Word, thy work shall stand.*

Satan is cunning, fear his wiles—
If mocked, the mocker he beguiles.

Strait is the gate, strive to pass through—
If hard the strife, thy load undo.

Life's fleeting, make of it the most—
Count every step, or all is lost.

Time's short, let there thy stake be small—
In vast eternity embark thine all.

PSALM XC.—A Prayer of Moses, the man of God.—*Verses* 1, 2. "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God."

HOW beautiful a prayer for New-Year's Day! Moses was an old and much-tried man, but age and experience had taught him that, amidst the perpetual changes which are taking place in the universe, one thing at least remains immutable, even the faithfulness of Him who is "from everlasting to everlasting God." How far back into the past may the patriarch have been looking when he spake these words?

The burning bush, the fiery furnace of Egypt, the Red Sea, Pharaoh with his chariots of war, and the weary march of Israel through the wilderness, were all before him; and in all of them he had experienced that "God is the rock, His work perfect, all His ways judgment."[1] But Moses was looking beyond these scenes of his personal history when he said, "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations,"[2] and we may be sure that he was also looking beyond them when he indited the song, "Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations." Yes; he was casting in his mind how God had been the refuge of Jacob and Isaac, of Abraham, Noah, and all the patriarchs. Moses could take a retrospect of above a thousand years, which had all confirmed the truth. I can do more. At this point of time I can look back to the days of Moses and Joshua and David, and descending thence to the days of the Son of God upon earth, and of Paul and Peter, and all the saints of the Church down to the present hour; and what a thousand years avouched to Moses, three thousand now avouch to me: the Lord is the dwelling-place of those that trust in Him from generation to generation. Yes; and to Him who was the refuge of a Moses and an Abraham, I too in the day of trouble can lift my hands. Delightful thought! That great Being who, during the lapse of three thousand years, amidst the countless changes of the universe, has to this day remained unchanged, is MY God.

Verses 3, 4. "Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men. For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday, when it is past, and as a watch in the night."

From life to death there is but a step, and that step a moment. All, indeed, seem to calculate that to them it will be a step of immeasurable length, one counting upon fifty, another upon sixty, a third upon seventy or even a hundred

[1] Deut. xxxii. 4. [2] Deut. xxxii. 7.

years. But long steps always involve a risk, and often wholly miscarry. The fifty, or, it may be, the eighty years for which they look, seem to them a fortune too vast for any spending to exhaust. But, ah me! every moment I live is so much subtracted from my life, and life is really little else than a lingering death. Of all fleeting things, what is there so fleeting? Is it not swifter than the ship that passes over the waves—than a weaver's shuttle that is never at rest[1]—than a post who fleeth away[2]—than the rush of waters when the drought dissolves the snow[3]—than the smoke that vanisheth into the air[4]—than the shadow of a cloud coursing over the plain? And yet, so thoughtless is man, that he fancies life to be of all funds the most inexhaustible. Let who will say if this be not playing the fool. It is, in fact, the very conduct on account of which the name of Fool is applied in Scripture. "Soul," said the wealthy husbandman to himself, when he had built his barns,—"Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." But death sang to him in another strain, "Thou *fool*, this night thy soul shall be required of thee."[5]

How transitory we are Moses clearly shows in the words before us, by contrasting man's brief span of life with the eternity of God. Such a comparison of man with God affords the best means of knowing either what we are or what we are not. And yet who ever tries to estimate the shortness of his own existence by comparing it with God's eternal duration? It is true that here, as in all other respects, God can challenge us, and say, "To whom will ye liken me and make me equal, and compare me that we may be like?"[6] In the passage before us Moses at least makes the attempt, saying that "a thousand years in His sight are but as yesterday when it is past." To a being of whom this can be affirmed, how brief must appear the whole successive generations of mankind! As morning succeeds night, so one race another, and

[1] Job, vii. 6. [2] Job, ix. 25. [3] Job, xxiv. 19.
[4] Psalm cii. 4. [5] Luke, xii. 20. [6] Isa. xlvi. 5.

they pass as in the twinkling of an eye. Often have I stood beside a flowing stream, and as I beheld wave incessantly following wave, and still the new wave come, I have mused with unutterable emotion on the like instability of human life. We are, indeed, but dust and ashes. But then the Eternal *knows that we are but dust and ashes*, and this is one, and doubtless not the feeblest, of the pleas on which we can build our hope when we come before His face.

> "For He remembers we are dust,
> And He our frame well knows.
> Frail man, his days are like the grass,
> As flower in field he grows.
> For over it the wind doth pass,
> And it away is gone;
> And of the place where once it was,
> It shall no more be known."[1]

But nevertheless, in this withering foliage of humanity the Eternal has made His abode. He erected His tabernacle among us, and "we beheld His glory." And what although this flower of the field perish before the evening wind; it does not perish for ever, but will revive beneath a brighter heaven, and bloom afresh, never more to wither. How low the Scriptures abase man on the one hand, and yet to what a height they exalt him on the other! And if so, I cannot but think, that on a New-Year's Day, while the chief impression received from all around is of the rapid flight of life, that impression ought not to be allowed to take exclusive possession of the mind. No; on such a day, the more I am made to feel that I am dust and ashes, the more will I also feel the magnitude of that grace which has done for dust and ashes such great and mighty things. In approaching the throne of God, I derive confidence from a double source,—from the thought that I am nothing, and also from the thought of that glory which, notwithstanding, He has put upon mankind, and which He invites all to partake.

[1] Psalm ciii. 14-16.

Verses 5-9. "Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth. For we are consumed by Thine anger, and by Thy wrath are we troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance. For all our days are passed away in Thy wrath; we spend our years as a tale that is told."

Stout and strong to-day,
To-morrow turned to clay.

This day in his bloom,
The next, in the tomb.

It is true that to some Death sends his grey harbingers before, and gives them timely warning of his approach. But in how many cases does he arrive unannounced, and, lifting his scythe, mows down the lofty! On shipboard there is but a plank between us and death; on horseback, but a fall. As we walk along the streets, death stretches a threatening finger from every tile upon the roofs! "He comes up into our windows and enters into our palaces; he cuts off the children from without, and the young men from the streets."[1] Our life is less than an handbreadth. How soon and how insensibly we slip into the grave!

But while youth lasts, we pay no attention to this. We look at the advancing waves upon the flood of time, more than at those which have rolled past, and sing to ourselves—

What though full many waves I see
Sweep downwards to the main,
The rolling flood continually
Brings wave on wave again.

There comes a time at length, however, when the eye involuntarily looks back, and observing the many waves that have rolled past, perceives in spite of itself that few can now roll towards us from before! We also find that the longer we live

[1] Jer. ix. 21.

the faster does life seem to fly, as if it were a task which practice rendered easy. Like a dreamless sleep, year passes after year, and when past, appears but a moment.

In this fleeting nature of life, the aged Moses was made to taste the wrath of God. For the doom that had gone forth against that whole generation, without exception of himself, and by which they perished in the wilderness, nor ever entered the promised land, was the penalty of their disobedience.[1] And all of us like him, in the frailty and mortality to which we are subject here below, may also, in a certain sense, be said to taste the divine displeasure at sin. We come to see that a life so sorely beset with wretchedness and frailty, cannot possibly be that true life which man would enjoy, were he still the pure and unfallen child of God. Is not the sigh—

> O land of substance, land of truth, for thee
> Longs my fond heart, yea faints thy light to see!

as often as it breaks from our bosoms, a confession that, like the prodigal, we are sojourners in "a far country"—a country governed by other laws than those of our native land, and into which sin has entered with death in her train?[2] Oh that even the withering grass of the field, and the fading rose upon the cheek, and all perishing things in this terrestrial vale, might teach me the mournful truth that I am the prodigal son, exiled from my home and country, and enduring well-deserved wrath!

Verses 10-12. "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knoweth the power of Thine anger? Even according to Thy fear so is Thy wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

There are many who suppose that a clear and certain fore-

[1] Num. xxxii. 12-16. [2] Rom. v. 12.

knowledge of the day of their death would exert a very powerful influence upon their mind. In this opinion, however, there must be some deception. All know full well that life cannot last above seventy, or, at the most, eighty years. If we reach that term without meeting the grim reaper with his scythe, there or there about meet him we surely shall. Death being thus the most certain of all certain events, why not begin at once the work of preparation for it? And yet we do nothing of the kind. In place of *preparing* to die, we continue augmenting the number of our *sins*. If, then, the thought of death from a distance of seventy or eighty steps makes so faint an impression upon the heart, would the impression be very much stronger if made from a distance of ten or twenty? There is here room for doubt.

And yet, on the other hand, the fact is undeniable that, at an advanced stage of life, when the landmark between time and eternity presents itself at no great distance, the thoughts do become more apt than formerly to range beyond it. We may hence fairly conclude that a premonition of death would be the most impressive of all intimations which a man could hear, at least if it discovered to him that he was *close upon* time's awful boundary. In that case, it would oftener strike his eye, and more readily suggest the question, what preparation should be made. The good of meditating upon death consists in the incitement it gives to inquire after Him who has vanquished its terrors. Unless it lead to an acquaintance with Jesus, meditating upon death can have no effect in delivering us from the convulsive embrace in which this life of sense enfolds the man unacquainted with a better. In fact, he who shudders at the reality, will shudder even at the *thought*, of death; and therefore, so long as Jesus has not taken away its terror from the soul, we will seek to avoid even thinking of it; and the more unavoidable we find the thought, the more will our fright increase. It is not so with me. God be thanked! I know Him who has disarmed death of his sting,

and hence I can think without dismay that the steps to the grave are at the most but fourscore.

That thought has for me no terrors, because I have learned where a sweeter rest is to be found than in the bosom of this sublunary world: it is in the bosom of God. To the man who has never had even a faint presentiment of the blissful Sabbath which the soul will there enjoy, it may appear an incredible thing when he is told, as by the Psalmist here, that life, even when it is sweetest, is only "labour and sorrow." He feels but the loss he sustains when the labour and the sorrow cease. He knows nothing of the gain which may then accrue. Mine is a different case. A lively sense of gratitude and joy kindles in my inmost soul when I reflect that, calculated at the longest, seventy or eighty steps will bring me to my journey's end. Let others quail at the milestones which stand by the wayside, and tell the passing pilgrim how small a portion of his journey is still before him compared with that which lies behind: for my part, I can behold them without dismay—nay, I hail them as I pass with joy; and to me such a milestone is every New-Year's Day. My looks are all the oftener directed homewards, and my pace quickens. Does it not even wing the feet of the fainting traveller to behold the towers of his native city rising above the mist, and appearing every moment more and more brightly to the view?

No doubt we must be sure about *the place to which* the way is conducting us. He who has found upon earth the city of his affections, and who with every onward step is only advancing towards a mist, may well look upon New-Year's Day as a day of sorrow. Well may it be a dark and gloomy day to the man who, as a poor and humble pilgrim, is journeying to some royal city, where he has not a single friend to welcome his arrival, or offer him the shelter of a roof. A poor and humble pilgrim am I; but, God be thanked! I know of one who long ago prepared for me a place.[1] Hence it is, that as I pass the milestones, each in succession becomes an altar, on which I

[1] John, xiv. 3.

present oblations of gratitude and praise. There are many, I am aware, to whom the thought of the flight of time is dispiriting. For me, I feel and experience that "He hath not given to us the spirit of *fear*, but of *power*."[1] Fear enfeebles, but confidence invigorates the mind.

Whoe'er has washed his sin and guilt
In Jesus' blood away,
And to Him cleaves like loving child
Still closer day by day,

With spirit undismayed will meet
The lowering future's wrath;
Though floods may fall and tempests beat,
He keeps his homeward path.

I know what awaits me in my Father's house, and hence,

Why should I hide that oft with longings keen
To reach the better land my bosom swells,
On whose celestial plains, full well I ween,
That good the soul here vainly pants for dwells,
Hailing with eager hope the happy day
When death shall free my wings to soar away?

But I also know that "whatsoever a man soweth" here, "that shall he reap" hereafter, and therefore,

In hope rejoicing precious seed I sow,
Men's hearts the soil, the seed God's holy Word.
And forth to see the growth full oft I go;
Tending it well in name of my great Lord—
Not in my own—until the harvest come,
When I shall reap the bliss of my eternal home.

[1] 2 Tim. i. 7.

69.

A Birthday.

SOUL.

Lord, spare me yet one year, and it shall be
Devoted all to duty and to Thee.

LORD.

The boon I grant; but YEARS *are quickly flown,*
Seize then the DAYS, *and make each day thine own.*

LUKE, xiii. 6-9. "A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, *well;* and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down."

SO then a year, one year, the respite lasts:
Whether I am to be cut down, or grow
For ever in my Master's vineyard fair,
All hangs on the decision of a year.
Lord, three long years Thou didst the fig-tree spare,
That emblem of my life in all its length—
Didst dig about it, and the branches prune,
Binding the tender shoots in the rude blast;
And duly as the year this day brought round,
The fig-tree Thou didst visit, seeking fruit,
And still hast spared it, though the search proved vain,
Redoubling all Thy care and pains again.
"Take then a book, and on its leaves inscribe
What on thy fickle heart to write were vain—

All I have done for, all I've tried on thee."
Master, Thy voice I hear, and my soul weeps,
And self-conviction is what makes it weep.
Oh yes, my heart is fickle, now so soft
That fades each line as if on fluid traced,
The next hour harder than unmolten brass.
Well, such a book I'll write, and thus begin,—
Footsteps of grace abounding in the life
Of an unthankful child. Be that the title,
And I will daily read it till the tale
Is on the tablets of my heart engraved,
The only volume large enough to hold it.
How hast Thou cherished me, Thou God of love!
With larger truth repaid my faithlessness,
And daily borne, and spared me, and forgiven!
Oft walked Thine angel at my side unseen;[1]
Oft have I quailed before my foes, while round
About me were Thy fiery hosts encamped,[2]
All unperceived, because faith's eye was dim.
Yes; still the ladder, once by Jacob seen,
Stands unremoved betwixt the earth and sky,
And if we would but upwards more aspire,
To us the blessed angels would come down.
Our hearts are shut, Thy heaven stands open wide,
And angel after angel sallies forth.
Jehovah, Thou who mak'st Thy messengers
The winds, Thy minister the flaming fire,[3]
Oh take the fleshly bandage from mine eyes,
That as I still encounter on my way
The heralds of Thy love disguised, I may
Through the dim veil their features recognise.
Fondly I longed such visitants to see,
Yet barred the entrance when they came to me.
And how have I requited all Thy goodness?
Oh! am I still Thy child, or have I been

[1] Psalm xxxiv. 7. [2] 2 Kings, vi. 17. [3] Psalm civ. 4.

Haply from the fair garden of Thy saints
Uprooted long ago, like many a tree
Which to the world seems to blossom fair,
Though knit by scarce a fibre to the root?
The field which, watered oft and plenteously,
Repays with thorns and briers the dresser's care,
Is nigh to cursing.[1] Am I such a field,
Curse-smitten? Yes; such were, indeed, my fate,
Tried by the laws and precedents of man,
Nor writ, nor advocacy could me save.
For oft, oh yes, *how oft, words cannot tell,*
I have been richly watered. But, thank God!
I know the phraseology of heaven—
Know that on high the little vocable
Oft has a larger import than on earth.[2]
Well know I, too, that when among the thorns
That fence the field the sweet *forget-me-not*
Stands a mute suppliant, the master ne'er
Disdains the lowly beauty of that flower.
Yet is he not with only flowers content,
But asks for corn, and wheat, and wholesome herbs
Reared by the hand of painful industry.
Hear then, O Lord, my sorrow. When of old
Thou to my care didst a small field intrust,
To keep and dress it was my happiness;
I never thought of duty or reward;
I never felt the irksomeness of toil;
The day's employment was the day's delight.
As years fled on, Thy love my bounds enlarged,
And to my growing strength gave ampler sphere.
Alas! the larger field bore scantier fruit.
Oh that for acting manhood's arduous part
The might *first love* inspired were mine once more!
Not that the high pulse tamed, the bounding heart
Sobered and cooled—not that I these deplore.

[1] Heb. vi. 7, 8. [2] Matt. xviii. 21, 22.

I wish not back the eyes with tears bedewed,
The meltings soft, the raptures high, renewed.
Childhood must pass with its caresses sweet,
And manhood come, with toils for manhood meet.
So the bright emerald robe of spring decays,
And gives to autumn's golden treasures place.
When in the Word Thou dost with zeal rebuke
That slumbering Church which her first love forsook,
Not tearful eyes, not bosoms all on fire,
Are what Thy keen heart-searching looks require;
But first love's active zeal and busy hand,
"Repent, *do the first works*,"[1] is Thy command.
With throbbing bosom I approach the source
Whence some proud river takes its origin;
And as I there behold the waters rise,
Spotless as silver or the orient pearl—
Yet how, still more and more as on they flow,
Sluggish and dark at each remove they grow—
Fast down my cheeks the bitter tears descend,
And with the fountain's crystal waters blend;
So at my own life's fountain pensively
I stand, and oft repeat the poet's sigh:—

> "Thou lowly spot, where first I saw the light,
> Experienced my first pleasure, my first pain;
> Few else may know thee; all who know, disdain
> Yet still one heart for thee with fondness burns,
> Constant to thee, where'er I wander, turns."

Say, ye who know the heart, why does it beat
Thus sadly at the place where the young eye
Drank the first sunbeam, and life's pulse first throbbed?
Yet why o'er all the sunniest spots between
Flies the fond look to linger on that scene?
Feel we the wish to live life o'er again,
To seek the footmarks, by the storms of time
All but obliterated, and once more

[1] Rev. ii. 5.

Retrace them one by one, as from the way
They deviate to the right hand and the left—
Here o'er the flinty rocks, there through the marsh?
Ah, no, poor human life! to have outlived,
Is to have quite outworn, thy happiest hours;
Thy oil of joy swims on a sea of tears,
Thy sunbeams are refracted on dark clouds.
And—deepest aggravation of our woe—
The drop which still bedews affliction's eye
Is to it like the glass that cheats the vision,
And multiplies one sorrow to a thousand.
Live o'er my life again!—Yes, the fond heart
Yearns for the flood of our departed years,
But yearns not for the bed in which it flowed.
Oh, could I grasp the torrent in my hand,
And pour it forth afresh, and guide its way
By a new course and channel to the main,
Then would I wish to live life o'er again.
In spirit thus, at my life's source I stand;
Gazing upon the silvery rill, methought
My burdened heart to solace with the sight,
But, lo, my tears have stained the waters bright.
Yet is it so? Does life but once begin?
Yes, only once for him, who must repair
To-morrow, while it lasts, this day's neglects;
For him who, as he journeys on his way,
Bears onward with him still from stage to stage
A vast and an accumulating load
Of sins, and of omissions, debts, and cares,
Up to the gates of the eternal world.
Yes, it begins but once; for time is swift,—
No morrow ever overtakes to-day—
No day is ever longer than another;
But, ah! our debts swell like the avalanche,
And if unpaid we leave them when we die,
Unpaid they stand through all eternity.

Not such my case, oh no ; for I have found
The elixir that imparts immortal youth,
O'erwhelms the gloomy shadows of the past,
And life, both in its dawn and day, restores.
O blessed power of faith ! I know thee well ;
Thou, like the great Creator's mighty fiat,
Dost swallow, in a moment, ancient night,
And call a new, more glorious world to light.

Yes, I do know thee well ; and if this day,
When by the guilt of a whole year weighed down,
And even by my own partial heart condemned,
I yet can calmly lift my eyes to heaven,
The praise, O wonder-working faith, is thine.
Thou from the chaos in this breast of mine,
Where midnight and despair had fixed their reign,
Didst life evoke, and love to life again.

What was I? I know not. What am I now?
A new-born babe bearing his Father's name,
A shield from every harm, upon his brow ;
And who, though thousand foes against him come,
Walks undismayed to his eternal home.

Oh what a change, baffling all thought to fathom !
Sunk in despair, I only lived to sigh ;
Now all my grief is turned to ecstasy.
Then in Thy vineyard let me still remain,
And Thou shalt seek no longer fruit in vain ;
For though the past have Thy forbearance proved,
Yet, sure, if grace for grace thus overflow,
The heart, however cold, at last will glow—
My first works I will do, and love as once I loved.

Thou peaceful spot, where on my wakening soul
The light of Grace its earliest radiance shed,
And, yet untasted sorrow's poisoned bowl,
Through my young being a sweet tincture spread,—
How does thine air, so soft and balmy, still
The pilgrim warm in age's evening chill !

Life oped to me her gates, and at my feet
 Scattered the glittering gauds that tempt desire.
Proud Science called me to her sacred seat,
 And Art allured with all her smiling quire.
The world my brow with honour's chaplets bound,
And wide and wider stretched the circle round.

Life's lowly hut a lordly palace grew,
 Swelled to a spacious sea the little lake ;
Alas ! as if disaster it foreknew,
 On the wide scene, my heart began to ache ;
And with a longing, mixed of joy and pain,
Sighed for the little hut and lake again.

And wherefore thus, even when at noontide high
 Sparkles life's sea, as if with gems bestrewed,
Back to the peaceful lake of Infancy,
 Pants the fond heart with longing unsubdued ?
It is because, while lasts sweet childhood's morn,
The rosy hues of *Grace* the scene adorn.

70.

Baptism.

Oh ill betides the little stone
That on some desert waste is thrown,
 And there forsaken lies :
And such by nature, child, thou wert,
But now we take thee and insert
 Into a glorious edifice.

ROMANS, vi. 4. "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death : that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

IT is a joyful sight when the parent looks upon his new-born babe. "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come ; but as soon as she is delivered

of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world."[1] To see before me a life, of which I can say that it is a portion of my own—a human being bodily and spiritually knit by the closest and most indissoluble bonds to myself—awakens deep emotion. The feeling is akin to *pride*, but pride it should not be; for how can we be justly proud of what we only receive as a *boon?* Besides, the same thought which here uplifts the mind, is calculated also to humble it. For what patrimony can I convey to my offspring? I may give him all that I am by nature. I cannot give him what I have become by grace; and the errors, conflicts, and defeats through which I have forced my way, await also him. Oh then, that at the very commencement of his course I could secure for him a blessing, which might serve for a helmet on his head, and a buckler about his breast, as he journeys on his way!

Surely there can be no parent but must have heartily thanked God for that passage of Gospel history which informs us that the Saviour welcomed little children when they were brought unto Him, and took them in His arms and blessed them. After this there can be no mistake that He loves the little ones; that He does not despise them because they are born flesh of flesh; nay, that He even looks upon them as possessed of softer hearts than ours. And if so, how can we ever doubt that He beholds it with approbation and delight, when, convinced that the best blessings we ourselves possess are those derived from Him, we bring to Him also our little ones and crave the same gifts for them? He has declared that all who resemble these little ones—all who, like them, with eager eye and outstretched hand are seeking for a guide—are welcome to His kingdom; surely, then, the little ones themselves must be heartily welcome too. They are so ready to obey the look, the nod, the word of man. Oh were the Saviour to undertake the charge of them, and from the first to operate upon their tender minds, with what alacrity they would follow His direction!

[1] John, xvi. 21.

It is true I do not clearly understand the way in which He imparts His blessing in the holy ordinance of baptism; but just as little do I clearly understand how the blessing was imparted to the children upon whom in the days of His flesh He put His hand. And yet nothing can be more certain than that it was no vain word which He then spoke, and that neither in infancy nor riper years did any one ever feel the Saviour's gracious hand upon his head without at the same time feeling the Saviour's gracious power within his heart. We are often conscious of a strong sense of gladness in all the veins and members of the natural man, and yet we cannot tell whence it proceeds. If, however, it arise from the imperceptible influence of the air, which, warmed and tempered by the material sun, penetrates through secret and invisible pores, and operates with exhilarating effect upon the fountain of natural life, why may not the breath of the Spirit of Jesus be able to penetrate, with the same genial efficacy, into the human soul, and there awaken life in its inmost seat? Oh when, in the plenitude of faith, I take the child which He has given me, and given me to rear for heaven, and presenting it to Him, say,—Lord, I know that of myself I am unequal to the task—I therefore choose Thee to be the proper Father of my child; receive him under Thy care, and train him in the right way,—this is an entreaty which He never will reject. He graciously answers, Yes. And what else but this gracious answer is the sacrament of baptism, which He makes the appointed minister of His Word dispense to my child?

"He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." For the present, indeed, the child is incapable of faith, and all that can be done is for me in his name to say, *I believe.* But then if the child believes *me*, and if I assure him, and confirm by actions the truth of my words, that there is none else to whom I can go for eternal life but unto Jesus, he will be disposed to believe that too on my assurance; and in so far his faith is concealed and wrapped up in mine. Neither let it be forgotten that the Saviour opened His Church to believers

of all degrees—to the weak as well as the strong, to babes in faith no less than to full-grown men. Take, then, the case of a child who from the first dawn of consciousness is reared among those who love the Lord, and whom the mother, while feeding him with the nutritive milk of her breast, feeds also with the richer milk of her heart, even her faith in the Saviour, and why should we doubt that, from the moment he opens his eyes to gaze into hers, such a child is a shoot on the mystical vine of Christ? Yes, long before either parent has uttered one *word* of instruction, have the mother's eyes been preaching to him in the truest sense of the term. And oh how much an eye can express—the eye of a mother—a mother's eye, which Jesus has enlightened! The deep peace of mind, the holy resignation, the purified love, reflected in the eye of a Christian mother, all penetrate through her suckling's, as he gazes on it, and go straight into his heart. How much soul, too, there is in such a mother's voice when she soothes her babe, and how its holy tones reach his inmost being long before he rightly apprehends the meaning of the words! Add to all this the silent and irresistible discipline which the manners of a Christian household never fail to exercise upon the members, and the daily observation of a life purified by the Spirit of Jesus, in father and mother, brothers and sisters. Ah! I am persuaded we lay far too much weight upon preaching aloud with words, and far too little upon preaching silently with works. As the flower in a dark cellar is attracted by a mysterious thirst towards the chink which admits the ray—as the infant himself, upon entering the world, and before he has opened his eyes to the material light, turns to the side on which it shines—even so, I believe, before the intellectual powers have been roused to action, may the infant soul be drawn by a mysterious instinct towards the great source of spiritual light, and imbibing its beams, be unfolded for eternity. The apostle himself says of the children of Christian parents that they are "holy."[1] Nay, he tells us that "the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing

[1] 1 Cor. vii. 14.

wife," in respect that mere fellowship with a Christian soul cannot but have a blessed effect even upon a heathen. And how then should the tender flowers of childhood, reared upon the soil of Christian faith, and in the atmosphere of Christian love, remain unblest?

Only let parents, when presenting their children to Jesus in baptism, present them in true faith, and for the sake of their faith, Jesus, I believe, will receive the little ones, graciously make Himself known to them, and bless them, however young. Nor will the bond of intimacy which He then forms with their souls be broken, at however early an age He may see fit to transplant them from the garden of earth to the garden of heaven. Of God's great garden this earth is but one small bed; and if into that garden He have once by holy baptism admitted a little plant, so will He also not fail to select for it the bed most propitious for its growth. Hence, O my child, I shall not be dismayed even though it should please the Lord to withdraw thee soon from my care. I know that He will intrust thee to a better care than mine. I have buried thee with Christ by baptism unto death. Now then thou art dead, and thy life is hidden in Jesus, but sooner or later He will bring it to the light.

Little one, thou art now not *mine* only; thou art also the babe of Christ. No more a child of low degree, thou art henceforth the offspring of a great King, and we owe thee reverence. I have received thee from the hand of Jesus, and into the hand of Jesus must I deliver thee back. When our Lord beheld the young daughter of Jairus upon the bed, "The damsel," He said, "is not dead, but sleepeth;" and recalling her departed spirit, He restored her to her parents, that they might give her food, and invigorate her reawakened life.[1] Even so, my child, He who is our common Lord has roused thee from thy sleep and consigned thee to my hands, that I may nurture and train thee up. Oh, when I this day call to mind the woe which He has pronounced against those who shall offend a little child,[2] how my soul is overpowered by its

[1] Mark, v. 43. [2] Matt. xviii. 6.

weight! It may be that thou wilt forsake thy Master, but God forbid that thou shouldst ever have cause to charge me with having offended thee! Little one, as thy sponsor, I have to-day declared in the sanctuary *I believe*, and by so doing have become answerable for thy faith. Now, therefore, it must be my concern and endeavour that thou mayest one day appear in the sanctuary for thyself, and in thine own name confess, *I believe*. But God be thanked! this concern pertains not to me only. No; He who woke thee from thy slumber, and consigned thee to my hands, has heard my prayer—heard me acknowledge that of myself I am unequal to the task. God be thanked! the child is His as well as mine.

Kind and gracious Master, oh what a debt of gratitude I owe Thee for providing my little one, at his very entrance into life, with such a shelter and defence! I will repeat to him from day to day that he no longer belongs to me alone. I will remind him whose hand has been laid upon his head, whose blessing he has received, and into what a goodly vineyard grace and pity have transplanted him. Yes, my child, thou art indeed come into the land flowing with milk and honey. That is the sweet food of all who dwell in the region of grace; and hence the custom in the ancient Church of giving milk and honey to the babe they were baptising. I will tell him what a solemn engagement I have undertaken in the sanctuary. Surely he will be unwilling that my word should be broken. And even though he might not scruple thus to put to shame his father on earth, never, surely, will he think of putting to shame that heavenly Father by whom he has been adopted. No; he will enter the battle like a hero, having now a Captain to lead him on. Nor does he require to fight in his own strength. He will fight in the strength of his Prince, who is the Prince of Life. In the baptism of the ancient Church they anointed the child with oil. It was an emblem of that unction of the Holy Ghost by which he will now be enabled to run his race and not be weary.

"When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood,

Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live."[1] O my child, it is the almighty God of heaven and earth who allures thee with such language. Canst thou resist? Remember *thou* didst not first love Him. No, He first loved thee, and, moved by love alone, drew thee to Himself, arrayed thee when naked in a royal robe, put bracelets on thine arm, a chain about thy neck, and a crown upon thy head. All this He did, not only without desert of thine, but before thou couldst even choose between good and evil. And against such loving-kindness canst thou harden thy heart? It cannot be. Thou wilt yield to the love of Jesus. It will govern thy heart and guide thy life. It welcomed and embraced thee on thy entrance into the world, and thou, to show thy gratitude, wilt cleave unchangeably to it, drawing from it supplies of vital strength to invigorate thy weakness.

Oh that it may be my lot with thee, and with all who are and who may yet be mine, one day to enter His presence, and say, "Behold, O Lord, here am I, and the children whom Thou hast given me"![2]

Take this babe whom we present,
Lord, to Thee, and own him Thine.
On his heart Thine image print,
On his brow Thy seal divine;
That when the deadly foes assail,
Thy name and sign may turn them pale.

Flesh of flesh, of Adam's race,
Naked thou wert born and blind;
Chosen now by sovereign grace,
And for child of God designed,
Where is the seraph in the skies
Who dares thy lineage despise?

Forth into the war of life,
Now for thee there's no retreat;
Yet to shield thee in the strife,
Wear the sign that wards defeat.
Lo! as the drops thy brow bedew,
Methought a conqueror's wreath they grew.

[1] Ezek. xvi. 6.

[2] Isa. viii. 18.

Child, thy pedigree survey,
 Offspring both of heaven and earth,
And when mingling in the fray,
 Ponder well thy twofold birth.
This will a watchful care inspire,
With courage that thy bosom fire.

If the foe shall tempt to slumber,
 Bent thy soul by stealth to slay,
Show him thou dost well remember
 That the feeble child of clay
To watch and strive has constant need,
In such an arduous war to speed.

But if open force he try,
 Counting thee an easy prey,
Then assert thy lineage high,
 Prove thy heavenly birth, and say,
He whom God to crown engages,
Laughs at Satan when he rages.

71.

Profession of Faith.

The food with which the babe is nursed,
 As still in arms he lies,
The mother's self partakes of first,
 Then from her breast supplies.

An infant at the mother's breast
 I've been until this day,
And faith's sweet manna, her repast,
 Has nourished me alway.

And I have fared so well that now,
 When free a change to try,
That food, I at the table vow,
 SHALL FEED ME TILL I DIE.

COL. ii. 6, 7. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: rooted and built up in

Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."

SO then I have this day emerged, as it were, afresh from the baptismal waters. There my beloved parents once promised and vowed in my name that I should believe in and love the Lord, and I will bear them testimony that they have done their utmost to redeem the pledge. Now, however, I have promised and vowed for myself, and to redeem the pledge must henceforth rest with me. Hitherto my faith has been involved in and sustained by theirs, but from theirs it must now be disengaged, and manifest itself independently.

First of all, then, to you, dear parents, I this day offer my warmest thanks. At an age when I was myself unable to choose, you chose for me, and dedicated me to my Saviour. From earliest childhood that dedication has been my guiding star; often has mine eye been lifted up to gaze upon its brightness, while my heart felt unutterably glad. Oh how can I thank you as I ought? *Twice* have you conferred on me the gift of life!

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in His times He shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting."[1]

How heart-stirring an appeal! Is it not just the appeal which the great apostle, had he been this day present in the sanctuary, would have addressed to me? Yes: I, too, have

[1] 1 Tim. vi. 12-16.

this day made my profession. I have made it before many witnesses—witnesses visible and invisible; before the congregation of Christians on earth, before the glorified champions of the Saviour in heaven, before my Saviour Himself. Never, O my soul, let me forget that *I have this day done homage to Jesus as my King*, sworn to be faithful to Him—sworn that I acknowledge Him as Sovereign, and that as His subject I will live and die. We read in Scripture of the captains who did homage to David, saying, "Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse: peace be unto thee, and peace be to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee."[1] Even so, O heavenly Son of David, do I now swear the oath of allegiance to Thee. I will be on Thy side so long as I live. Let Thy peace be mine; for Thy God helpeth Thee.

Many are my adversaries, and of great power. I must, I see, gird myself for battle. In Scripture the young are specially summoned to the spiritual conflict. "I have written unto you, young men," says St John, "because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one."[2] Behold in the ranks of the advancing foe foremost comes the lust of the flesh. Engrave then, O Spirit of the Lord, indelibly engrave upon my memory that I am no longer my own. Not only is my soul my Master's; my body also is His—and like a jewel which He has committed to my care, I must keep it for Him unblemished and unstained.

Nor am I less apprehensive of the pride of the natural heart. How at this season of life is all about me calculated to fan into a flame the innate sparks of ambition! while I feel that my own heart within thirsts all too keenly for human honour and human praise. And yet the praise of man, like the fumes of sulphur, will turn the fairest rose of virtue pale. Hitherto I have had little experience of the magnets which the world presents, and by which she so powerfully attracts the affections. Now my intercourse with it will increase from day to day, and all that flatters the lust and vanity of the flesh will be employed

[1] 1 Chron. xii. 18. [2] 1 John, ii. 14.

to tempt me. Oh how I wish still to preserve my soul in soundness and simplicity, that amidst all enticements, however powerful, it may still feel and own the influence of the eternal magnet! The hymn written by the pious Spangenberg on *simple-mindedness* stirs with a strange power my inmost heart :—

"Holy grace, of graces rarest,
Might and wisdom's purest beam,
Kindling love, of gems the fairest
Miracle of power supreme.

Freedom is a fettered captive,
Riches but an empty wind,
Beauty's self a charm deceptive,
Severed from a simple mind.

Eye within, when thou art single,
All the soul is full of light;
But if jarring aims we mingle,
Mist and darkness dim thy sight.

Simple heart, thou ever burnest
For the one chief good above,
To the heavenly loadstone turnest
With entire and constant love."

Oh, should the magic veil which the charm and glitter of the world draw around the eye, ever intercept or obscure my view of the Saviour, resound, sweet hymn, in my inward ear, and dissolve the spell!

Great is the power of temptation, and I am without strength, for though the spirit be willing, the flesh is weak. But weak although I am, my Lord is mighty. The vine is among the feeblest of plants, and yet, if fastened to the pole, it borrows a strength not its own, and bears a load of generous clusters. And, like the vine, let me but lean upon my Master's cross, and I will grow strong, and be enabled to bear fruit unto Him. The venerable Luther used often to say, "I would not wish to have my soul in my own hands, for if it were, Satan would long ago have snatched it away, in the twinkling of an eye, as the vulture does the chick; but from the hands of God, to

whom I have intrusted it, neither the devil nor any else will ever pluck it out." The blood was yet young in his veins when the chaste Joseph tore himself from the arms of seduction, saying, "How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Daniel, too, was a youth when he refused to eat his portion of the king's meat, choosing rather to incur the wrath of an earthly monarch than transgress the commandment of his God. At the same early age, what insult, mockery, and persecution did not David endure at the court of the ungodly Saul? And yet he avouched, in faith, "*The Lord* is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? *The Lord* is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?"[1] Oh that I possessed a courage like his!

Nor must I expect temptation to arise solely from within my breast; I must also be prepared to encounter it from without. Having this day vowed to own my Lord before all the world, should I not be ready to suffer shame before all the world, rather than *prove false to Him?* "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not,"[2] is the admonition of heavenly wisdom—and to me it is addressed. I must muster fortitude, in the face of mockery, insult, and disgrace, to avouch with the Psalmist, "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart."[3] That is the proper courage for youth. Surely it is courage of a far nobler kind than his, who, for the sake of what men call honour, is ready to sacrifice life. Turn, dear Master, oh turn away mine eyes from the garlands which the world confers, and fix them upon the crown of glory which Thou offerest. Those shall wither; but this endures from eternity to eternity.

This is my better *birthday!* On the day of my natural birth, as it annually returns, I fall upon my knees and adore Him who called me to the light of the material world. I look upon this as the birthday of my spirit; and on it also I kneel, and adore Him for opening to me the door of His glorious heavenly kingdom. Nor shall I forget to keep it. I shall keep it every time

[1] Psalm xxvii. 1. [2] Prov. i. 10. [3] Psalm cxix. 111.

I approach the holy table, to which I have now obtained access, there to partake of the body and blood of the Lord, and to show forth His death. I will avouch before His assembled people that He only is to me the bread of life. I will thank Him for having inserted me, though but to fill some little chink, in the great and glorious edifice of His Church—that Church of which Himself is the chief corner-stone. I regard this as a distinguished honour. Humble may be the place allotted to me in human society; but let it fully satisfy my soul to be assured that "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." From time to time in the Holy Supper I will set up afresh a memorial of my sins, that I may never lose sight of them, nor forget the suffering which they brought upon my Saviour. From time to time in the Holy Supper I will assure myself anew that *mine* were among the sins for whose remission the blood of the New Testament was shed, and the pledge He there vouchsafes me of their pardon shall be my provender on the journey to the eternal world. In this way, O Lord, will I show Thy death until Thou—come again.[1] Yes, come, Lord Jesus, oh come! and by Thy help may I be found "blameless in the day" of Thy appearing.[2] Grant me to be faithful, that as I have now been enrolled a member of Thy Church on earth, I may also become a member of Thy Church in heaven. There, also, shall we celebrate the Supper; and, oh, "blessed are they who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb"![3] Help me, O Lord, that I may be found among them.

My name is entered on the list,
I've plighted hand and word,
To love and live for none but Christ,
My Saviour and my Lord.
Ye comrades in the ranks below,
And ye who wear the crown,
Witness the irrevocable vow
That seals me as His own.

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 26. [2] 1 Cor. i. 8. [3] Rev. xix. 9.

And I will prove that vow sincere,
Whate'er the cost may be;
Nor weal nor woe, nor hope nor fear,
Shall shake my constancy.
For Him I will not love my life,
But shame and death defy;
Undaunted in the hour of strife,
And meek in victory.

Oh, happy soldiers they who serve
Beneath Thy banner, Lord!
And light the task, if Thou but nerve
The arm, to wield the sword.
The sacred pledge in childhood given,
To such success secures;
And still they hear a voice from heaven
Repeat, "The prize is yours."

And since Thy truth stands like a rock,
That voice can might impart
To brave of hostile foes the shock—
Yea, quell the rebel heart.
Though Satan fiercely rage without,
And fears o'erwhelm within,
Rings in the air Faith's victor shout,
"*Against the world I'll win.*"

72.

The Holy Supper.

Thine is a richly-furnished board,
And royal-like the fare;
When to regale Thy friends, O Lord,
Thou dost the feast prepare.

"*Soul, eat and drink,*" *Thou say'st; and if*
We hear Thy voice divine,
There's in the bread eternal life,
And Spirit in the wine.

MATT. xxvi. 26-28. "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the

disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

I DESIRE, in the sincerity of my heart, to draw near, not unworthily, to the table of my Lord. Alas! however, I am weak, and of myself unequal to such a duty. I turn, therefore, to Thee, O Holy Spirit! It is Thy office to enlighten the darkness of the human soul. Come to my aid, vouchsafe Thy light, and enable me to know myself. I am about to show forth the Lord's death before the Church; and there can be no better preparation for doing so than that I should once more fully realise what the Lord is to me, and what I should be to Him.

I confess unto Thee, O holy God, that I am a poor hell-deserving sinner, whose words and works, whose heart and walk, have merited a thousandfold Thy righteous displeasure. I confess that in my inmost soul there dwells a criminal aversion to thy commandments, and an ever-recurring reluctance to do Thy holy will; that my flesh is ever prone to seek, with all eagerness, the good things of earth in preference to those that are well-pleasing in Thy sight; and that every day whole hours elapse in which I never once remember that Thou art my Master, and that I am Thy servant. I confess before Thee, O holy God, without excuse or palliation, that I am yet far from loving my fellow-men with pure and self-denying affection; that I am more ready to look to my own advantage than to study my neighbour's good; that I am fonder of being ministered unto by others than of ministering unto them. And as for Thee, O Jesus, whom I purpose this day once more to confess before Thy people, alas! how often, by word and deed, have I not shamefully denied Thee? I am about to celebrate Thy death—that death to which Thou wert brought by generous love to the sheep of Thy flock. And yet how painful I feel

self-denial to be, even when all I am called upon to surrender for my brethren is some paltry fragment of my worldly substance! Behold, I conceal from Thee no part of my guilt, that no part of it may remain unforgiven. I will cover none of my stains, that Thou, O gracious God, mayst wash them all away. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice."[1]

Lord, who is worthy to dwell in Thy temple? In the counsels of Thy grace, this honour is assigned to him only who knows how infinitely it *exceeds his deserts*. Dear Master, in the days of Thy flesh Thou wert the friend of publicans and sinners, but didst reject those who were righteous in their own eyes. Thou art Thyself the Shepherd who left the ninety-and-nine sheep in the wilderness to seek the one that was lost. And even now, on a day like this, all Thou requirest of us is just to be sincere before Thee. "Blessed," says the holy Psalmist, "is the man in whose spirit there is no guile."[2] I will therefore calm my anxious soul in Thy presence, provided Thy Spirit bear me witness that I appear at Thy table *without guile*. Whom dost Thou call to this feast? Not the rich and strong, but the sick and needy. "Come unto me," Thou sayest, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give thee rest." These are the terms in which, from time to time, Thou repeatest the invitation to Thy table, and only on such occasions do I fully comprehend their meaning.

Dost Thou require a token that my penitential confessions proceed from the heart? Alas! full well I know that the tears I shed are not enough. A man never truly and at heart repents of his sin until he likewise *parts with it*, and *desires to let it go*. There is, I am aware, a false repentance that weeps, but only to be exempted from the *penalties*, in order that it may keep a firmer hold of the *sin*. And many, I am convinced, if called upon to part with their bosom sin at the

[1] Psalm li. 7, 8. [2] Psalm xxxii. 2.

threshold, would even tremble to enter heaven. Keep me from such hypocrisy, O my God! And yet, alas! few probably are wholly free from it; for, otherwise, how were it possible for days like the present to produce so immaterial a change in the customary routine of life? Ah! were the tears which are wept at the cross of Jesus not merely tears of a weak heart *mourning over guilt*, because guilt entails *punishment;* but were they, on the contrary, tears of a strong heart, *hating sin* because *sin is hateful to God*,—then, methinks, they would infallibly operate like a corrosive acid; and although they might not at once eat away all the proud flesh from the heart, surely they would at least separate between good and evil in the walk and conversation; surely they would *cut furrows* in the life which would be visible to the eye. Among the many delusions from which I need protection, keep me, I pray, from that of *tears!* Tears are, indeed, a precious fluid. Silent is their course as they trickle down the cheek, and yet they can cry to heaven more loudly than any prayer. Yes, great in the sight of God is the worth of genuine tears. Here, upon earth, we wipe them away, and to all appearance they are lost. But they are not lost. An angel collects the drops, and bears them into the presence of God.[1] This, indeed, is only true of *genuine tears*. And in every case where *these* are shed, there also the heart has become a fountain welling forth other waters—waters which moisten and fertilise the soil, so that it produces fruit.

Zaccheus shall be my pattern. He presented himself to the Saviour and said: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold."[2] Here, then, by a decisive test, we recognise a soul really prepared to *part with* sin. In the same way I look around me to see how my errors may be repaired; and wherever this is possible, it shall be done. Have I neglected those holy ordinances and means of grace, which Thou, O Saviour, hast conferred

[1] Psalm, lvi. 8. [2] Luke, xix. 8.

upon us; this very day will I begin a new course, resign myself afresh, in the exercise of calm meditation and the study of sacred Scripture, to the discipline of Thy Spirit, and cultivate closer fellowship with the children of God, that I may thence derive increase of strength. Have I been inattentive to my business; I will study to make up for past omissions. Have I dispensed my charities to the poor with niggard hand; henceforward I will shrink from no sacrifice in order to make compensation. Have I failed in affection to my relatives; I will confess my fault; for he who wants fortitude to humble himself before men, never truly humbles himself before Thee. The little good I have done has been done in such a way that the left hand knew too well what the right was doing. But most pleasing in Thy sight are the charitable actions which are performed in silence, like oil when it is poured forth; and the approval of the eye which seeth in secret should be more to me than the applause of all mankind.

I know, however, that these vows will prove just as unsteadfast as those which have preceded them; and, alas! do what I can, I cannot make good the past. So long as the root is not thoroughly sanctified, how can the fruit be good and holy? Hence it is that I thirst for *grace*, for *free grace*, for the pledge of Thy *forgiveness*. During Thy sojourn upon earth Thou didst not disdain to be called the friend of publicans and sinners. Nor even now dost Thou refuse to enter the abode of a Zaccheus. To all like him Thou tenderest a pledge that, in spite of their sins, Thou hast not cast them off. Nay, as only in fellowship with Thee their souls can be healed, Thou unitest Thyself to them in spiritual wedlock. A holy thrill penetrates my soul when I receive Thy body and blood, and reflect who they are with whom Thou holdest such communion. And yet, O Lord, this is still Thy wondrous way, to humble and prostrate on the ground before Thou dost exalt. Thy language is, "I who dwell in the high and holy place, am with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit." [1]

[1] Isa. lvii. 15.

My heart, already melted by a sense of the greatness of my sin, is even more so when I think of the greatness of Thy mercy. "Rend your hearts, and not your garments," exclaims Thy prophet; "and turn unto the Lord your God."[1] My heart is rent; it has become soft and yielding; take and mould it according to Thy will.

"As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come."[2] So writes the apostle; and, in truth, O Lord, partaking Thy body and blood in the Supper is a sort of compensation for Thine absence—an earnest to sustain my hopes until the time when I shall possess Thyself. Thou enterest into my soul now mollified, and wilt this hour fill the spiritual mouth of Thy disciple as surely as he opens it and hungers after Thee. "Thy flesh is meat indeed, and Thy blood is drink indeed," as Thou hast said; and although at all times I am conscious of Thy presence, I yet thank Thee that in this ordinance Thou comest in a visible way to help my faith, and givest me assurance that Thou holdest communion with my soul, and art joined to me in spiritual wedlock. What the bread is to my body, a nutritious food; what the wine is to my spirits, an exhilarating juice,—that, O my God and Saviour, are Thy body and blood to my soul; they mysteriously impart to it nutriment and life. Yes, of a truth, never am I more sensible of the magnitude either of my own guilt or of Thy condescension, than when I leave Thy table, bearing with me the consciousness of being knit afresh as a member to Thy body.

I can well conceive how much more elevating this solemnity would prove, could it be said of all who engage in it that they know what they do; and if that holy awe with which the thought of Thy condescension inspires the hearts of some, penetrated the hearts of all, and all hearts in an equal degree. On the other hand, however, it also puts me to shame when I see that Thou dost not reject even those of whom that can-

[1] Joel, ii. 13. [2] 1 Cor. xi. 26.

not just be said. Only let the heart be sincerely yearning after Thee, only let the soul be seeking comfort, although, perchance, with ill-defined notions of Thee—a personal Lord and Saviour—Thou dost not withhold Thyself from it. And by so doing, oh what an example dost Thou set me not to scorn even the weak members of Thy Church, but on a day like this, without comparing or finding fault, to acknowledge myself one with all who desire publicly to show forth Thy death! There, beside a veteran grown grey in the battles of the faith, sits one who appears (so far, at least, as is known to *me*) a mere child of the world; beside the youth of quality, some poor and aged mother; beside the man of learning, an untutored maid; and yet to each of all these souls Thou drawest near, so truly and so closely that their spiritual mouth tastes the savour of Thy presence. This thought has often deeply humbled my carnal pride and love of censure; for how lightly do I presume to deny the claim of many to fellowship with Thee, while yet it is evident that often where we least suspect it there is a secret yearning of the soul after Thee, and unalterably steadfast is the word Thou hast spoken: "He who cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

And how dare I, the sinful fellow-servant, take upon me to cast out any who have not been cast out by Thee, the Master? On this day I will learn to overlook the infirmities and forgive the faults of my brethren, especially those of my nearest connections. Thy Word declares that no oblation is acceptable so long as the heart which supplicates forgiveness of Thee has not itself learned to forgive others. When, therefore, I leave Thy table, refreshed by Thy love, I will meet them all with a new heart. They are not merely *my* brethren, they are also *Thine.* Oh, were there no other ground for loving and respecting them, let me love and respect them for this, that they have been nourished and refreshed by Thy body and blood.

Give me grace, O my God, to renew my covenant with Thee; and although I should again stumble, I will learn by degrees to walk with a firmer step. Most deeply do I feel

how, more than all else, the thought of Thy condescension towards me, in spite of my many pollutions, softens my heart, and fits it for receiving Thee. On that account I go boldly to Thy table, in the confidence that I will find manna for my heart, that Thou art pleased to see me, wilt make me welcome there, and that thus my hope shall not be put to shame. Herein vouchsafe, O gracious God, to help me, for Thy boundless compassion's sake! Amen.

Whom dost Thou, dear Redeemer, call
To Thy sweet feast of grace,
Admit into the banquet-hall,
And at Thy table place?
'Tis not the proud, the rich, the strong,
With earthly good content,
But sick and weary souls, who long
For nobler nourishment.

Ah! didst Thou for the pure alone
The royal feast prepare,
Small were the hope for such a one
As me to find a share.
But since the blind, the sick, the lame,
Obtain admission free,
I, too, will venture, in God's name,
To join the company.

Yet who would think the guests he sees
Around that table placed,
Were victims all of foul disease,
With ghastly wounds defaced?
For, lo! their generous Host provides,
From His full store on high,
For each a shining robe, that hides
All his deformity.

And I, in that bright garment dressed,
Will to the table go;
For, Lord, Thou wilt not scorn a guest
Because his rank is low.
When others coldly close the door,
Wide flies the gate of grace;
And he who was the least before,
Obtains the highest place.

73.

Outset in Life.

Forth o'er the wide and stormy flood
My bark now steers its way.
Fades in the mist my sire's abode,
Now fades the upland grey.
Haunts of my childhood! far away from you,
Wide o'er the spacious main I cast an anxious view.

But see, on ocean's farthest brim,
Yon land so fair and bright,
Emerging in the distance dim,
Salutes my ravished sight.
Speed well my bark! and on that radiant shore,
Partings and seas and storms we'll fear no more.

PSALM cxix. 9. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy word."

AT last my little bark must leave the quiet bay in which it has hitherto found shelter, and venture forth into the mighty waters. Oh, who will help me to shun the cliffs and weather the storms, that I may reach in safety the destined haven?

I feel the paramount necessity of knowing, even in regard to my temporal calling, that I am walking in the ways of the Lord. Had I the smallest ground to suspect that the line of life on which I am about to enter had been selected for me, by either my own or my parents' vanity, my courage would fail at the very outset. But with the conviction that the Lord Himself has prescribed to me the way, I shall walk as with a hold of His hand. My daily work ought to be to me an act of worship, and my place of business a temple. Stablish,

therefore, O God, my fickle heart, that I may no more look aside to the right hand or the left, and no more court either the pleasures or applause of the world, but that in all I do, not excepting my temporal avocation, I may fix an unaverted gaze on Thee alone. When he wishes to take a good aim, the marksman closes one eye in order to collect the whole power of vision into the other. Make my eye single, that in all my pursuits Thy approbation may be my only aim. Thy approbation alone confers true greatness. The praise of his fellows can, no more than his own shadow, make a man either greater or less. May the testimony of a good conscience in the sight of God reward me every evening for the toils of the day. By dint of labour I must dig the blessing from the earth below; but no less must my prayers draw it down from heaven above. Oh let me never lose sight of that slender and mysterious thread, which extends from earth to heaven, and connects every work of man with the Divine hand, that so I may continually remember that more depends upon *Thy blessing*, than upon any industry and skill of my own, or all the favour and assistance of others.

Wild and tumultuous is the throng in which I now go forth to mingle. But in that throng, angels of Thine walk about in disguise. Oh that it may be my lot to meet with some of them! Lord, I beseech Thee, from my inmost heart, that on my way through life I may not journey alone. Nevertheless, should Thy wisdom deem it better for me to want a friend, and live solitary on earth, then open to me all the more freely and fully the invisible treasures of Thy friendship; and, in the strength I derive from secret fellowship with Thyself, teach me to walk to Thy praise before the children of the world. "Evil communications corrupt good manners,"[1] is a precept of Gentile wisdom. To the danger of which it warns let me never be insensible. In journeying through the world, we walk upon ice and in the midst of thorns. Give me a discriminating mind, that I may discover of what spirit they are

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 33.

with whom I shall have to do. It is impossible to pass safely through life without possessing somewhat of the wisdom of the serpent, as well as of the simplicity of the dove. Thou expressly requirest of the children of light to be not merely wise, but *prudent*,[1] like the children of this world. We are to "walk circumspectly."[2]

> Look well before thee and behind,
> Fickle and false are men by kind;
> As nettles burn and thistles sting,
> The heart is a deceitful thing.

This is an admonition which I need to take home. I am too lavish of my confidence. It is an easy matter to give the hand; but the hand once given, cannot so quickly be withdrawn.

Beyond all doubt, however, the worst of our enemies are those we carry about with us in our own hearts. Adam fell in Paradise, Lucifer in heaven, while Lot continued righteous among the inhabitants of Sodom. Indifference to little sins and mistakes—the self-flattering voice of the heart, ever ready to sing its lullaby the moment conscience is roused—the subtle question of the serpent, "Hath God, indeed, said?"—these are unquestionably the adversaries we have most to fear. There never was a fire but it began with smoke. I beseech Thee, therefore, dear Master, to give me a sensitive conscience, that I may take alarm at even small sins. Oh! it is not merely great transgressions that can bring a man to ruin. Little and imperceptible ones are, perhaps, even more deadly; according to the beautiful figure of Tauler, who says: "The stag, when attacked, tosses from him the great dogs, and dashes them to pieces upon the trees; but the little ones seize him below, and tear the entrails from his belly." Let me never forget that, among all the avocations allotted to me, the principal is to be Thy champion and soldier. To this, accordingly, I must give my chief attention; for "no man that warreth," saith the apostle, "entangleth himself with the

[1] Luke, xvi. 8, Φρονίμως. [2] Eph. v. 15.

affairs of this life, that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."[1] My hands and feet shall perform my daily task, but my heart shall soar above it. The thorns that choked the seed of the word were the *cares of this world*.[2] And true it is that worldly cares can so wind about a man as to make it impossible for him to extricate himself; and if once they wax rank and multiply, all hope of the growth and increase of the seed is for ever gone. The stalk may still stand, and the ears appear, but for the ripe grain in the ears we look in vain. Men begin with seeking to *divert* the mind, and they end with *subverting* it. Chase away the *fowls* that devour the corn.[3] The fowls are amusements; and they come with such haste, and so take us by surprise, that, ere we are aware, many a precious seed is snatched from the heart.

And alas that the weapons Thou thyself puttest into our hands, even the precious means of grace, should be allowed to rust disused! For me, should the time ever come when I cannot take up the sentiment of David and say, with truth, "The law of Thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver;"[4] should the time ever come when, exhausted with the labours of the day, I feel no desire to drink in fresh strength from the fountain of Thy Word,—good reason shall I have for beginning to tremble at the state of my heart. Thy holy Word is the magnet by whose attraction the mind ought again to be raised aloft, when carnal sloth weighs it down to the earth. A little text daily taken from the Word, and laid up in the heart, is like a corn of spice. Touch and rub it, and every time it will emit new strength. Nor is the right observance of the Sabbath less a spiritual weapon, which we do not sufficiently use. The Christian who has to toil the live-long week, should esteem it one of the high privileges vouchsafed him by his Lord to be allowed to rest on the Sabbath, and live that day to his Lord alone. On the Sabbath, therefore, I will endeavour to disencumber my heart of the disquietudes of the bypast week, and to recruit it with God and

[1] 2 Tim. ii. 4. [2] Matt. xiii. 22. [3] Matt. xiii. 4. [4] Ps. cxix. 72.

His Word. I will attend the preaching of the Word in the sanctuary, and will not there seek after oratory and eloquence, but content myself with the simple Gospel, whenever delivered genuine and pure. Whether the pipe that conveys it be of gold or lead, the stream of Thy Word is still mingled with water of life. It is right, too, that the body and the weary bones should rejoice upon the Sabbath; but this, *before Thy face,* dear Master, not *behind Thy back.* The joy we taste before Thy face, and no other, leaves after it a sweet and lasting relish. Besides, the Sabbath is the proper day for performing many an act of charity, for which no opportunity could be found during the week; and in works like these, the spirit often experiences a rest so delightful that the body sympathetically enjoys a share. Nor shall I count it a small thing, dear Master, that on Sabbath Thou often presidest at Thy table, inviting hungry souls to come and be nourished with Thy body and blood. If denied the happiness of meeting with many of Thy children in the wicked world, I will all the oftener frequent Thy own company, and imbibe strength from fellowship with Thyself.

On no day of the week, however, after having given twelve hours to labour, will I consent to be defrauded of the privilege of dedicating at least one evening hour exclusively to Thee. Nor will I ever desist from prayer because at the time I may feel no pleasure in it. No. For that very reason will I press all the more closely to Thy heart, until my own again has caught the warmth. I consider it one of the most dangerous of Satan's temptations, when he tries to persuade a man, who can only pray feebly, rather not to pray at all. Whereas, O gracious Master, Thou regardest the heart alone, and if we have but the will to pray aright, even that will itself is an acceptable prayer to Thee. What should we do with the coal, in which only a faint and glimmering spark still lives, but bring it into Thy presence, that with the breath of Thy mouth Thou mayst blow the spark into a flame? Hast Thou not promised not to quench the smoking flax, but, in answer to earnest

prayer, to pour oil upon it, and make it blaze afresh? And even though the utmost we can do is but to come before Thee, and show, with sorrow, the coldness of our hearts, saying, "Lord, if it be Thy will that I should be as at this moment I am, even so let Thy will be done;" though this be all we can do, even this shall not be done in vain. Never does man present himself before the uncreated Light, with a heart humble, and weaned of all self-will, without at least reaping one advantage. He becomes more assimilated to that Light; and it is so true, that

> The noblest prayer a suppliant ever pours,
> Is to resemble that which he adores.

Well do I know the hypocrisy of my own heart. Often and bitterly does it complain of wanting strength, and yet, in seeking to obtain it, builds its only hopes on such things as change of outward position, and all manner of extraordinary helps and expedients, whereas there can be no doubt that, in the very commonest means of grace, Thou hast laid up an inexhaustible treasure of counsel, strength, and consolation, for those who truly desire them. Man, however, is like the patient in a fever, who, as if the heat were without him and not within, fancies all would be well could he but change his clothes or get into another bed. Or he is like one who goes a-searching on every side for the philosopher's stone, with which to manufacture gold, and yet, at the very moment, the mine is beneath his feet, and all he wants is industry to use the spade. Without industry, however, as we cannot obtain food for the body, so just as little can we obtain food for the soul. In all cases, by Divine appointment, bread must be paid for by the sweat of the brow; and he who would enjoy the fire, must first endure the smoke. Lord, Thou art "a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress."[1] Fulfil to me Thy promise, and may I feel in my warfare that I war in Thy strength. I desire to be strong in no other strength but Thine; and if Thou take sword and buckler to fight my

[1] Isa. xxv. 4.

battles, who is he that shall prevail against me? My loins I will gird about with sincerity and truth, that I may learn to walk with certain step. I will put on the breastplate of righteousness, of that righteousness which is of grace and not of works, that I may be of good courage, even in the evil day. I will cover my head with the helmet of salvation, *that* salvation which has been purchased for me, but with no endeavours of mine, and is reserved in heaven. I will hold before me the shield of faith, which quenches all the fiery darts of the wicked one, and my right hand shall wield the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, which strikes even Satan dumb.

Many are my adversaries, but my armour is complete; arduous is the conflict, but abundant the strength; hard the toil, but glorious the reward. O Thou, who, by Thy mighty power, wert able to keep a Lot righteous even among the citizens of Sodom, a Joseph chaste in the house of Potiphar, and a David pious at the court of Saul, forsake not me, Thy child, when walking through the great and tumultuous crowd who know not Thy name. Wide is the sea through which I have to steer my course, and high its swelling waves; but grace is the breeze that fills the sails, my compass is faith, and my pilot, Christ. Of whom shall I be afraid?

The march is full of toil and pain
 Through this terrestrial life,
And he who hopes the goal to gain
 Must boldly brook the strife.
The foe who meets us face to face
 May safely be defied,
But Satan treads with stealthy pace,
 And skulks on every side.

Hence must we hardness still endure,
 And watch both day and night,
Nor ever dream we are secure
 Though danger's out of sight.
For, be the mournful truth confessed,
 We our ownselves betray,
And hosts in ambush in the breast
 The foe's commands obey.

Ah me! it is but hopeless work
To keep the citadel,
When traitor friends within it lurk,
And foes without assail.
In such a pass, nor bolt nor bar
Yields any fence at all;
And comes not God to turn the war,
The place must surely fall.

Come then, Thou great Almighty God
Of hosts, for our defence,
Whose arm in former ages brought
Our sires deliverance.
Courage, faint heart—dismay, farewell!
Let doubt and terror cease.
Jehovah stands as sentinel,
And I may sleep in peace.

74.

Marriage.

Two water-drops that meet and mingle,
No art of man can e'er make single;
And wedlock's bond 'twixt man and wife,
If twined in heaven, endures for life.

MATT. xix. 6. "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

THE solemn words have been at last uttered, "*Until death shall separate you.*" This has indeed been for long the language of our hearts. Now, however, that it has been spoken by the lips of the minister, *God* hath joined us together.

First of all, then, to Thee, O God, I present the offering of my *gratitude.* How great the boon, when to one human be-

ing Thou givest the heart of another, to be exclusively his own! I have been intimate with many a heart on this earth, but then I always knew that others shared its affections along with me. Now, however, there is a heart which I can claim as wholly mine, and that of all hearts the one I love the best. Thou givest all double, when Thou givest a man the heart with which he would most fondly share his all. Yes; my property, my talents, my whole existence, are all bestowed upon me anew, in the gift which I this day receive from Thy hand. Oh forbid that that gift, dear and precious though it be, should hide from me the Giver! No, Lord, never shall I forget that it was from *Thy hand* I obtained it! I have to thank those of my fellow-men who intrusted the dear one to my care, and allowed her to become the companion of my way. I will thank herself for her consent, and my thanks to her shall consist in the most faithful love and service. It is to Thee, however, O Lord, and for Thy *amen*, that gratitude is properly and supremely due.

The father's smiles his joy reveal,
The mother fond, the match to seal,
 Unites the lovers' hands.
To wish them joy, with many a jest,
And mirth on every face expressed,
 Arrive the smiling bands.

At length the appointed morn is come,
And friends and kinsmen crowd the room:
 The priest has spoke the word.
Yet all that bridal pomp is vain,
And parents' smile, and priest's amen,
 Without Thy blessing, Lord.

We belong *to Thee*, O Lord, before we belong to *each other*, and before we give our hearts to each other we must first give them to Thee. Indeed the very reason why we are to become each other's is, that each may help the other to become more and more entirely Thine.

There may be thousands who, on such a day as this, deem it justifiable to indulge only visionary dreams of joy and pleas-

ure, and who, in a kind of intoxication, make their entrance into a state involving duties undoubtedly sweet, but which are at the same time unspeakably serious. But I beseech Thee, Lord, vouchsafe to me a sober mind; and place before my eyes, in all its magnitude, the importance of my duties. She has left father and mother to follow her husband; what sacrifices, then, do not I owe to one who has thus sacrificed all for me? In the fullest sense of the word, I must make her the half of myself. Is it not the very nature of love to recognise a second self in the person who is its object? And if we do really find in the beloved object another self, should we not be willing to toil and bear, and sacrifice for her sake as much as for our own? Teach me, O my God, to love in this fashion; that so to live for her, and to suffer for her, may be the delight of my life. Even natural affection can make this an easy task, but unless sanctified by the love of Thee, natural affection will sooner or later give place to the love of self. It is so much more pleasing to our nature to be ministered unto, than to minister to another; and as thine own Word has appointed the man to be the head of the wife, we are greatly too apt to forget that the man exists for the wife's sake as much as the wife for the man's. We husbands are commanded to "love our wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it."[1] Implant, then, O Lord Jesus, and root in my heart, that tender and devoted love which finds its happiness in ministering. May the attentions I pay my wife acquaint me with its nature, and the married state prove a school for its continual practice.

But let all this be done in Thee, and before Thy face. Yes, Lord; forbid that I should ever make an idol of even the dearest object Thou hast given me upon earth. I must love her not *along with* Thee, but solely and entirely *in* Thee. Well did the apostle understand the dangers of the married state, when he says, "He that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife."[2] I thank Thee for having given me a wife who would herself take alarm were

[1] Eph. v. 25. [2] 1 Cor. vii. 33.

she to see me setting my love of her above my love of Thee. No; it shall be a settled point between us, that as we both were Thine before we were each other's, so the best and only way of pleasing each other shall be by seeking to please Thee. O heavenly Love, Thou who gavest Thy very life to purchase us for a peculiar possession to Thyself, daily shall we admonish each other that we are *Thine*, that neither of us may ever forget the solemn truth. Thou hast ordained the wife to be a helpmate to the husband, and the husband a helpmate to the wife,—in what better way can we help each other than by each helping the other to become more and more exclusively Thine own?

Mutual *edification* shall be our constant aim. No friend can edify another as a husband the wife, and a wife the husband. Who can see so deeply into the faults and frailties of the heart as they into each other's? Between parties so connected there can be no concealment. The veil must be dropped, and the inner man stand fully disclosed. If, then, the contract between them have been really formed with a view to mutual help, not so much in acquiring the perishing things of this life, but rather in striving after the blessings that are imperishable, how great the good they may do each to the other! Oh give us sincerity and uprightness of heart, that there may be no concealment between us, how painful soever the disclosure may prove, of what we know must be displeasing to Thee. We shall make it our business to exhort, instruct, and reprove each other, until Thy holy light have transformed our inmost being, and assimilated it to Thine image. We shall strengthen the hands that hang down, and encourage the fainting heart; by word and look inquiring from hour to hour, Is all right between thee and God?

It may be that Thou hast decreed for us the honour of rearing heirs for Thy kingdom. But how shall we rear others for Thee, unless we have first become Thine ourselves? Whether so great a happiness shall be vouchsafed to us or not, we leave at Thy disposal. "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is his reward."[1]

[1] Psalm cxxvii. 3.

But if, in Thy grace, Thou have destined it for us, then do we all the more earnestly beseech Thee first to make ourselves Thy true children, that so we may be qualified to rear others for Thy heavenly kingdom. "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."[1] Resting on that text, we this day join hands; with that text we now enter upon our way. From Thee cometh both to will and to do; make Thy strength perfect in our weakness.

Look down upon a loving pair,
Who bring their meek and earnest prayer
 Into Thy presence, Lord.
One fond desire we have and true,
To serve thee still, in all we do,
 By action or by word.

Yes, from this hour, so dear to both,
In which we pledge our mutual troth,
 By hand in hand compressed,
Be hand with hand united still,
To do Thy good and holy will,
 Till in the grave we rest.

And now, before the word we speak
That knits the bond man must not break,
 We fain would know Thy mind.
Lord, be the sweet conviction given
To both, that Thou thyself, in heaven,
 The hallowed bond hast twined.

Thy Spirit send to make us mild,
Humble and chaste, and meek as child,
 In love conjoined to Thee.
Give to affection's warmest glow,
From soul or sense, howe'er it flow,
 Celestial purity.

And should it be our lot to rear
Young plants to grace Thy garden here,
 Or fairer bowers above,
May children in their parents see
Patterns of faithfulness to Thee,
 Integrity and love.

[1] Rom. xiv. 8.

75.

The Evening of Life.

What means this knocking at my gate?
A stranger old and thin
Lingers without—as it grows late,
Should I not call him in?

Yes, call him in without dismay,
His looks are like thine own;
Who knows but he may force his way,
If once impatient grown?

And call I will, though man and maid
Grow pale, and hold their breath:
My boding heart the truth hath said;
It is—it is—FRIEND DEATH!

ISA. xxxviii. 1. "In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live."

GOOD cause has he for gratitude to whom the Lord sends such a messenger, saying, "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die;" and this is the lot of all, excepting those who are cut off in the midst of their years. For let a man gradually grow old, and how many messengers, one after another, arrive, admonishing him to set his house in order! Says not the proverb,—

"Age, like a well-bred man, before
He enters the house, knocks at the gate,
Knocks at the window, knocks at the door,
Cries at all corners, 'Hark, I wait!'"

Alas for him who grows old without growing wise, and to whom the future world does not set open her gates when he

is excluded by the present! The Lord deals so graciously with us in the decline of life, that it is a shame to turn a deaf ear to the lessons which He gives. The eye becomes dim, the ear dull, the tongue falters, the feet totter, all the senses refuse to do their office, and from every side resounds the call, "Set thine house in order, for the term of thy pilgrimage is at hand." The playmates of youth, the fellow-labourers of manhood, die away, and take the road before us. Old age is like some quiet chamber, in which, disconnected from the visible world, we can prepare in silence for the world that is unseen.

There is nothing more forbidding than to see an aged person who refuses to give up a world which yet is giving up him. Even the unsanctified mind feels this conduct to be most unnatural; although, doubtless, if a man have his treasure in this world only, his heart will also be where his treasure is. How then, O Lord, shall I express my grateful sense of Thy mercy, in having given me the assurance of an inheritance in heaven, and redeemed me from the bondage of this perishing world? Oh how wretched — how unspeakably wretched — should I be, if at this time of life I had still my God to seek! It is hard for the old to undergo conversion and reform their ways. Even old age, perhaps, may have strength enough left to deplore the vain courses of the past; but to enter upon a new path, and steadily and resolutely pursue it, must be difficult for the old indeed. Justly, therefore, does the preacher say: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them. . . . Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."[1]

Even this, however, is not all; for how impoverished should I feel if left in my silent, solitary hours, destitute of all my treasured recollections of God's gracious dealings towards me

[1] Eccles. xii. 1-7.

during the long pilgrimage of life! If we can look behind us upon a vast extent of way, whose many thorny places and mountains and precipices we have safely traversed with a hold of the divine hand, we are then enabled, with cheerfulness and confidence, to look forward also to the hour when we shall have to cross the last deep gulf. A thousand trials have made us familiar with the hand, which will then also uphold us, and thus we muster courage for the final onset.

"O death! how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that liveth at rest in his possessions, to him that hath nothing to vex him, and that hath prosperity in all things; yea, unto him that is yet able to receive meat," saith the son of Sirach.[1] Yes; and by what expedients do such men try to overcome thy bitterness? Oh! when I see them, like some beaten foe who retreats from fence to fence behind the last intrenchment —driven now from the joyous revelry of youth, and anon from manhood's keen enjoyments, until they are reduced at last to solicit a faint gratification from stimulating, perhaps, a languid palate—oh! when I see them, like the worm which cleaves to the withered leaf, feeding on the wan and shadowy remembrance of days never to return, and trying whether it may do them any good to *forget* that which they now no more can *change*,—how do I then, with my whole soul, exclaim, Thanks be to Jesus Christ, my Lord, who hath delivered me from the bondage of this corruptible world! The poet says,—

> "Taught by some impulse from on high, men's minds
> Suspect the coming danger, as we see
> The waters heave before the approaching storm."

But of you it may be said,—

> "They hear the wild winds lash the bursting sails;
> At every joint the shivering vessel creaks;
> But strike they will not, and go blindly down."

How sweet, O death, is the thought of thee to the man who could never find a satisfying portion here below, but who, even

[1] Ecclus. xli. 1, 2.

amidst this fleeting life, still lived and leaned upon the promises of that which is everlasting! I do not quail before thy scythe—it can cut off nothing which I am not willing to leave behind, that the wings of my spirit may bear me unencumbered away. Old age! for him who has a Saviour, thy rosy evening changes so insensibly into dawn, that there is scarce a night between!

Yes, I will set my house in order; the task will not be difficult. My accounts are all settled. The best of my property I take along with me. I leave my children to the great Father of the fatherless, to whom belong heaven and earth. My body I bequeath to the earth, and my soul to the Lord: He has sued for it longer than my life, and He bought it with His blood. Thus I lay every weight aside, and am ready for the journey. When the traveller has paid his debts in the city of a foreign land, how does he exult to pass the gate as he bends his steps homeward! I have no more a single creditor upon earth, and I know I shall find none in the place to which I go. Oh! it is a blessed thing to die, when we can say with Hezekiah: "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness; but Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back."[1] Yes, old men, the Blessed thistle is an herb of precious use.[2] It soothes the aching of the heart. But beside the cross of Jesus there grows a plant that is fairer still, and has a juster claim to be called *Heart's-ease.* Nothing like it alleviates the bitter pangs that precede the hour of dissolution.

Life! I have enjoyed thee. Every draught from thy fountain was not bitter to my taste; nor is all vain beneath the sun, provided we enjoy not the creature only, but in the creature the Creator. That which made thee sweet, however, was the loving-kindness of my God, conveyed to me through all created things, as through so many pipes and channels, and

[1] Isa. xxxviii. 17.

[2] The *carduus benedictus*, once so approved as a simple, especially in affections of the heart.

this loving-kindness of my God I shall take along with me. The earthen pipes through which it used to flow may indeed be shivered, but He who made them can be at no loss to find others to supply their place. Extinct, for ever extinct, is all the pleasantness of life, so far as the creature only was its source. But in so far as in all our enjoyments it flowed from the thought of that supreme hand by which these were conferred, the pleasantness of life exists, and will abide with us for ever. And in this way how may every day become a treasury, and the very poorest life exuberantly rich! No, I cannot look back upon mine as if it were a mere vanity. Even now, when from my silent chamber I survey it all, my heart fills with an exultation which it cannot contain. I feel that I need a new heart and a new tongue to utter all that my God has done for me, and worthily to sing His praise. What sort of hearts can they have who find it difficult to understand how praising God for the mercies He has bestowed can constitute a main part of the felicity of the upper world? Among the gifts of the Spirit of grace, this itself is one, that the longer we frequent the school of Jesus, so much the richer source of delight does thanksgiving become. I have always the impression that here upon earth my gratitude has never yet found adequate expression. Words cannot utter, tears cannot exhaust, and even the deep sigh, which escapes like a full spiritual tear from my heart, cannot reveal it all. There will, however, be new tongues and new languages. Paul has told us of the tongues of angels; and on the day of Pentecost the apostles received tongues of fire, with which to declare the wonderful works of God. Oh, when the everlasting Pentecost arrives, surely, with the spiritual baptism which it brings, it will also bring new tongues, with which to praise the mighty works of God, in strains far loftier than here on earth our faltering lips could ever reach.

Zion, thou city of my God, in spirit I am already enrolled among thy inhabitants; and although for a little I must continue to sojourn in the flesh, my days shall be spent in prepa-

ration, that when at last I enter thy glorious streets, I may not appear as a stranger there. Whatever of thine, O earth, I cannot take along with me, let me forget—forget for ever. It is not worth remembering. But yet, while my respite lasts, it shall be my daily study to carry away from thee as much as I can, that it may be still a source of enjoyment to me when admitted into the everlasting tabernacles. And inasmuch as the very best of thy gifts need not be left behind, but may accompany me whither I go, why should I still cling to thee when I hear the cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh!" At every season of life we should be as servants who wait for their master, with loins girded and lamps burning. Oh, how much the more proper is this for the man who has death already standing at his door!

Come, bridegroom, haste!—Why dost thou stay?
The setting sun now dims his ray;
The shadows yon far mountains cast
Along the plain are lengthening fast;
And all the fond companions, reared
About my side, have disappeared.

Yes, all who once were mine are gone—
I'm left in this bleak world alone,
And in life's evening, cold and late,
It is a weary task to wait:
O bridegroom, mend thy pace and come,
Open the door and take me home!

Sun of my life, thou sett'st to rise,
And run thy course in brighter skies.
Oh, then, how sweet to fall asleep,
And think that morn ere long will peep,
With rosy smile, the lattice through,
And wake us into life anew!

Within my breast fresh warmth I feel;
Around me all is bleak and chill.
Within, hope hails a world more bright;
Without, there's nothing gives delight.
Here, friends have fled and gone to rest;
There, dwells the truest friend and best.

Hence with so eager gaze I wait
Thine advent bright to ope the gate.
Ah, bridegroom, if thy tarrying mean
My heart from other loves to wean,
Even now this blessed end is won—
Thou art my love, and thou alone.

76.

The Death of the Christian.

If in thy cool and silent bed,
O grave! the ashes of the dead
So sweetly rest,
How passing sweet the rest must be
Which waits the soul from flesh set free,
Among the blest!

Rev. xiv. 13. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from thenceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

THERE lies the garment which the pilgrim wore, in sunshine and in rain, from the beginning to the end of his earthly journey. What strange thoughts pass through the mind as we stand beside the dead—thoughts that never elsewhere occur! How much I would still have to say to him—how much to ask him about—how many requests to make! But his ear hears not—his mouth speaks no more. Methinks we would act more kindly towards our fellow-men, could we realise the feelings with which we see them dressed in their winding-sheets, and stretched upon a bier.

Departed spirit, from the purifying furnace of tribulation thou hast passed into the presence of God! At last the covering drops from thine eye, and faith is converted into vision.

How is it with thee now? Oh how shalt thou feel when from thy Master's lips, whose hand upheld thy goings, though His face thou couldst not see, thou shalt hear the words, "Good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord," and when thy Lord's joy is reflected in thine own bosom? The fruit has fallen in its season—it was fully ripe. Yes, departed saint, it has been thy appointed lot to ripen on the earth. Largely didst thou taste the pleasantness, and largely, too, the labour and sorrow of human life. But thou didst not taste them in vain. The work of thy hands without was also a work within; and even thy secular employments were a building up of thy soul for a temple to God. When on the evening of some sultry day the cart reaches the homestead, loaded with the golden sheaves, the members of the household all rejoice. Even so, O happy spirit, do I now behold thee entering thy heavenly Father's house amidst the exultations of the celestial host. Surely when there is joy so great in heaven, lamentation ought to be hushed on earth. Ah! if from thy lofty dwelling-place thy voice could reach us here below, what else wouldst thou say but—*weep not?* We must then wipe away our tears.

Even while sojourning on earth, thou didst not belong to us; thou wert still *thy Master's*. And now that He has taken thee away, what remains but to thank Him for having lent thee to us so long, and—to hold fast the good which, through thee, as the means, we have received? Blessed spirit, thou shalt still abide among us. Thou hast imparted to us so largely of what was best about thee, that, though now departed, we in a manner possess thee still. With the vividness almost of personal apparition, thou seemest to stand in the midst of us, so that we can take counsel of thee, and receive instruction from thy lips, after these have been closed by death. Thy business on earth was still to watch over and pray for us; and so faithfully, so fervently was it done, that the blessing of thine intercession is not yet exhausted, but, like a dew of God, will drop down upon us as long as we live. Nor shall even

the vision of the light eternal efface us from thy memory, for the light eternal is the light of love.

Fought out is thy fight of faith. We have learned from thee that it is possible for a man to endure as seeing Him that is invisible; and with that lesson on our minds, we need not sorrow as those who have no hope. They have laid thee in the grave; but that which they interred was not *thyself*, it was thy *garment* only; and with it have they buried the toils endured and the tears shed by thee all the time thou hadst it on. Yea, and thy very garment shall one day be given thee back, renewed by the hand of Omnipotence, and cleansed from every stain of weeping. For thyself, He who said, "Where I am, there also shall my servant be," has taken thee home; and oh it is good to be there! Why should we mourn? True, thou art no longer with us; but He who was able to give us a father, a husband, a friend like thee, must himself be a greater Father, Husband, and Friend. Oh, when death removes from the midst of us one who, by all he said and did, was ever pointing to Him who is invisible, how do the hearts of survivors about his grave cling close and closer each to the other, and all to that unseen God! Such a soul is like a ray emitted from the eternal sun. It returns to its source again; and ever after, our eye can fix upon the sun a more unaverted gaze. We can no longer lean upon thy bosom; but we shall lean all the more upon the bosom of our God.

It is also a great blessing connected with the death of Christian friends, that even after their decease the love we bear them still continues to exercise over us a salutary influence. Oh to meet with thee again! is the voice of our longing hearts. We know, however, that there is no way by which we can reach the place where thou dwellest save that which led thee thither. Why are men so apt, when they think of meeting again, to figure it only as the inevitable sequel of death, forgetting that beyond the grave there are several different roads? Yes, glorified saint! we shall see thee, we shall meet with thee again, for we shall strive to follow thee on the way thou didst go.

Oh, when from the last of the heights to be surmounted in the path of life we turn and survey the conflicts that lie behind, how insignificant they appear, and how blessed must that man be whose heart then bears him testimony that he did not shrink from them! Standing, as I now do, beside the remains of one of God's soldiers who has thus victoriously accomplished his warfare, I say to myself, All is over now, hard and insurmountable though for the time it appeared. How deep the stillness about the corpse! *Yes, calm peace at the hour of death is so great a good as to be cheaply purchased by braving the struggles of a long life.*

"The memory of the just is blessed."[1] Yes, thou sainted warrior of God! the remembrance of the conflicts of thy life and of thy peace in death shall abide as a blessing among us, perpetually discoursing how the sufferings of time are not to be compared with the exceeding glory that shall be revealed. Thy funeral knell shall continue ringing in our inward ears till the last hour of our lives, admonishing us to live like thee, and like thee to die, that so we may one day enter thy everlasting rest. O Christ! Thou who hast abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light, unite once more, in Thy eternal kingdom, those whom Thou didst here bring together in Thy love. Amen.

Thine was a weary dream until
The faltering pulse at last stood still;
And oft thy quivering lip and eye
Bespake an inward agony;
But never yet by word revealed
The woe, from all but God concealed.

Oft, too, some vision bright would seem
A while to soothe thee in thy dream.
Yet soon, too soon, alas! it fled;
And, silent and unnoticèd,
The night of grief, the mists of pain,
Stole o'er thy troubled soul again.

[1] Prov. x. 7.

But death has come, the trance to break,
And set thee free, and bid thee wake.
Oh, when at last the dewy blaze
Of glory gushed upon thy gaze,
As oped to vision's light thine eye,
Can language tell thine ecstasy?

Tell how transported thou didst sink,
The flood of love and bliss to drink;
Tell how the joy that through thee streamed,
First from thy kindling eyeballs gleamed,
Then, quick as thought, thy bosom filled,
And every nerve with rapture thrilled?

Too bright for truth the glory seems.
"What if again my spirit dreams?"
I hear thee ask, in deep amaze,
Till every pulse within thee says,
Exult, O happy soul, and sing—
This is the great awakening!

Yes, now at last thou art awake,
No sleep for evermore shall break
Thy work, thy rest: oh happy they,
Escaped, like thee, from time's dark day,
To bathe in heaven's unclouded light,
And love and glory infinite!

Vain earth, with all thy toils, depart!
Thou hast no portion for the heart.
Thou didst us rear, and for that boon
We may not quite forget thee soon.
But ah! our home-sick spirits pine
For fairer, happier scenes than thine.

THE END.

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Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: Nov. 2005

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